

Screen



Scenarios of exposure

Metaphors of space

Space of performance

Genre, gender, Vietnam

Index to volumes 31-33

Subscription & order information:

Screen is published four times a year at an annual subscription for institutions of UK and Europe £45 USA and Rest of the World US\$92 for individuals of UK and Europe £25 USA and Rest of the World US\$50 and for Students and Unemployed UK and Europe £20 USA and Rest of the World US\$40. Prices include postage by surface mail or for subscribers in the USA, Canada, Japan, India, Australia and New Zealand, by Air Speeded Post.

Payment is required with all orders and subscriptions are accepted and entered by the volume(s). Payment may be made by the following methods: Cheque (made payable to Oxford University Press), National Girobank (Account 500 1056), Credit Card (Access, Visa, American Express, Diners Club), UNESCO Coupons, Bankers' Barclays Bank plc, PO Box 333, Oxford, Code 20-65-18, Account 00715654. Individual rates apply only when copies are sent to a private address and are paid for by personal cheque or credit card.

Please send orders and requests for sample copies to: Journals Subscriptions Department, Oxford University Press, Walton Street, Oxford OX2 6DP. Telex 837330 OXPRESG.

© 1993 The John Logie Baird Centre. No article may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording or any information storage and retrieval system without the permission in writing of the editors and the publisher. **Screen** incorporates **Screen Education**.

ISSN 0036-9543

Cover illustration

A. 'Pregnant' Muscle Exercises
Courtesy of the Paper Print
Collection, Library of Congress.

editors

John Caughie
Simon Frith (Reports editor)
Sandra Kemp
Norman King
Annette Kuhn (Reviews editor)

issue editor

Sandra Kemp

editorial assistant

Julie Light

editorial advisory board

William Boddy (USA)
Annette Brauerhoch (Germany)
Beverley Brown (UK)
Giuliana Bruno (Italy/USA)
Charlotte Brunsdon (UK)
Alison Butler (UK)
Barbara Creed (Australia)
Sean Cubitt (UK)
Alan Durant (UK)
John Fletcher (UK)
Claudia Gorbman (USA)
Pat Mellencamp (USA)
Steve Neale (UK)
Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (UK)
Julian Petley (UK)
Jackie Stacey (UK)
Will Straw (Canada)
Gillian Swanson (Australia)
Ginette Vincendeau (UK)

editorial address

The Editors, **Screen**
The John Logie Baird Centre
University of Glasgow
Glasgow G12 8QQ

34:1 Spring 1993

MICHAEL SELIG: Genre, gender and the discourse of war: the
a/historical and Vietnam films 1

CONSTANCE BALIDES: Scenarios of exposure in the practice of
everyday life: women in the cinema of attractions 19

FELIX THOMPSON: Metaphors of space: polarization, dualism and
Third World cinema 38

IVONE MARGULIES: Delaying the cut: the space of performance in
Lightning over Water 54

reports and debates

MARTIN ALLOR: Cultural *métissage*: national formations and
productive discourse in Quebec cinema and television 69

DAVID WILSON: Inside observations 76

MICHAEL STEWART: BFI Melodrama Conference 80

HELEN STODDART: Screen Studies Conference 82

reviews

KAREN ALEXANDER: Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other:*
Writing, Postcoloniality and Feminism 85

ALAN MCKEE: Richard Dyer, *Now You See It: Studies on Lesbian*
and Gay Film; Bad Object Choices, *How Do I Look: Queer Film*
and Video 88

SANDRA KEMP: Philip Hayward (ed.), *Picture This: Media*
Representations of Visual Art and Artists and Culture Technology
and Creativity in the Late Twentieth Century 94

MARTIN ALLOR: Ien Ang, *Desperately Seeking the Audience*; James
Lull, *Inside Family Viewing* 99

index

INDEX to volumes 31–33

SCREEN STUDIES CONFERENCE

•
25-27 June 1993

Glasgow
•

The theme for the 1993 Screen Studies Conference will be histories.

Plenary topic: Historical Methodology

Papers will include work on the history of television texts, colonial and postcolonial cinema, and research on gay and lesbian film. Please note that there will also be open panel and workshop sessions.
•

The Editors • *Screen* • John Logie Baird Centre • Glasgow University
Glasgow G12 8QF • Scotland • UK
•

Universities of Glasgow & Strathclyde

JOHN LOGIE BAIRD CENTRE

Taught Masters Course
(one-year)
in
MEDIA & CULTURE

For information please write to:

Margaret Philips • John Logie Baird
Centre • Strathclyde University •
Glasgow G1 1XH • Scotland • UK

Universities of Glasgow & Strathclyde

JOHN LOGIE BAIRD CENTRE

The Baird Centre invites applications
from qualified candidates for
Ph.D. BY RESEARCH
Film • Television • Popular Music

For information please write to:

Margaret Philips • John Logie Baird
Centre • Strathclyde University •
Glasgow G1 1XH • Scotland • UK

- 1 See for example Thomas Doherty 'Full metal genre: Stanley Kubrick's Vietnam combat movie' *Film Quarterly* vol. 42 no. 2 (Winter 1988-89) pp. 242-30. David Everett 'Whillock: Defining the fictive American Vietnam war film in search of a genre' *Literature/Film Quarterly* vol. 16 no. 4 (1988) pp. 244-50. In David James and Rick Berg's 'College course file: representing the Vietnam War: they refer to the currency of the detestable phrase: Vietnam-as-genre' *Journal of Film and Video* vol. 41 no. 4 (1989) p. 60. For a brief discussion of the problem of treating these films as a genre see Linda Dittmar and Gene Michaud 'Introduction - America's Vietnam War films: marching toward denial' in Linda Dittmar and Gene Michaud (eds) *From Hanoi to Hollywood: The Vietnam War in American Film* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990) pp. 1-15.
- 2 Judy Lee Kinney 'The mythical method: fictionalizing the Vietnam War' *Wide Angle* vol. 7 no. 4 (1985) p. 40. Interestingly a number of recent films have proclaimed that they are 'true stories' (e.g. *Bat 21*, *Hamburger Hill*, *Casualties of War*, and *Born on the Fourth of July* (1989)).
- 3 As far as I can tell this was first noted in relation to the films by Gilbert Adair 'Vietnam on Film: From *The Green Berets* to *Apocalypse Now*' (New York: Proteus, 1981) p. 109. Susan Jeffords expresses a similar concern when she notes that women's Vietnam experiences are either effaced or subsumed under those of men 'Women, gender and the War' *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* vol. 6 no. 1 (1989) p. 87.

Genre, gender, and the discourse of war: the a/historical and Vietnam films

MICHAEL SELIG

In the past several years, Hollywood has produced a considerable number of films about US intervention in Vietnam. Whereas critics and scholars once lamented the industry's virtual exclusion of this part of US history, now we are faced with trying to stem the tide of relatively simplistic and formulaic films often being taken as serious historical commentary. An unfortunate common critical response to the proliferation of these films has been to attempt to set boundaries around them, to delimit them as the 'genre' of 'Vietnam films'.¹

At least two things trouble me in these discussions of the Vietnam film as a genre. Most of these discussions emphasize the formal similarities between the films while little or no notice is taken of the manner in which the films confront history. This is unusual in light of the common critical response at each film's release to focus on the degree of accuracy in the film's representation of history. At times, this concern with authenticity has gone beyond noting a specific misrepresentation – for example, the misdirected sunset in *The Green Berets* (1968) and the symbolic Russian roulette in *The Deer Hunter* (1978) – to illuminating the 'avoidance of the particulars of social history'.² Certainly one of the most damning aspects of these films is their presentation of the white US soldier as the victim of Vietnam, a presentation which tends to eclipse the acknowledgment of the historical reality of economics, race and gender as factors in the conduct of the 'war'.³

In any case, the discussion of Vietnam films as a genre rarely

1 Screen 34 1 Spring 1993. Selig 'Genre, gender and the discourse of war'

incorporates a criticism of historical misrepresentations. At best, scholars and critics only hint at a connection between the films' generic elements and their historical inauthenticity. Fredric Jameson, for example, refers to US intervention in Vietnam as the 'first terrible postmodernist war', one which 'cannot be told in any of the traditional paradigms of the war novel or movie' ⁴ James William Gibson's comments on 'paramilitary culture' also emphasize the absence of a satisfactory 'narrative and ideological paradigm' and the forced assimilation of the events of Vietnam 'Unlike previous American experiences of war, there was no popular cultural archetype to account for successful Vietnamese resistance to foreign invaders' ⁵ The comments by Jameson and Gibson fail to recognize, however, the inevitability of narrative, and thus misrepresentation. They posit a fallacious opposition between the historical distortions of 'traditional paradigms' and the, for now absent, narrative which will represent the historical reality of Vietnam

With this in mind, the films 'avoidance of . . . history' may not be the issue so much as *how* they avoid history; what is especially significant may not be a reality that is ignored (and which is ultimately unknowable), but a narrative or 'ideological paradigm' which dominates its representation. What is lacking, then, is a critical encounter with the generic elements present in these films (rather than the history that is absent), an encounter that goes beyond noting superficial similarities in iconography and character. We need to recognize that the emotional authority these films hold ⁶ rests not in what seemingly distinguishes them as a group, nor in their (mis)representations of history, but in their conventional Hollywood narrative symbolics.⁷

This brings me to my second concern with prior critical discussions of the so-called Vietnam film genre. To discuss a set of films as a genre is to imply, either directly or indirectly, that the films are somehow distinct from other film genres, or genre films (or conventional stories in general, for that matter).⁸ If Vietnam films share a distinctive characteristic, it is their appropriation of the language and iconography of a particular historical moment (usually from the sixties and early seventies) and the subordination of that moment to 'traditional paradigms' which are decidedly not exclusive to the so-called Vietnam film genre. In fact, the appropriation of a Vietnam era imagery merely masks the attempts to reestablish a traditional cultural and political identity in response to the way in which, in Gibson's words, 'defeat in Vietnam . . . created a cultural crisis among the American people'.⁹ This 'cultural crisis' is more limited, however, than Gibson would lead us to believe, for it is a 'crisis among the American people' only insofar as we understand the nation and its 'culture' in decidedly masculine terms Susan Jeffords notes this when she observes that the cultural response to this so-called crisis is a 'remasculinization of America' ¹⁰

- 4 This critical demand for authenticity leads Jameson to praise Michael Herr's *Dispatches* in particular for its evocation of a post modern hyperspace. See Fredric Jameson *Postmodernism and consumer society* in E. Ann Kaplan (ed.) *Postmodernism and Its Discontents: Theoretical Practices* (London: Verso 1988) p. 25
- 5 James William Gibson *Paramilitary culture: Critical Studies in Mass Communication* vol. 6, no. 1 (1989) p. 90
- 6 The press coverage, the box office returns and the inordinate number of Oscar winners and nominees attests to the authority that these films hold in the US cultural preoccupation with Vietnam
- 7 I will subsequently refer to all films as Hollywood films. Obviously all these films are not produced in Hollywood or by Hollywood studios but they do tell their stories in a manner more or less typical of conventional Hollywood narratives
- 8 This is unfortunately an implicit aspect of the books on Vietnam films and the three anthologies that collect articles and essays on Vietnam films and literature. Linda Dittmar and Gene Michaud (eds) *From Hanoi to Hollywood: The Vietnam War in American Film*. Michael Anderregg (ed.) *Inventing Vietnam: The War in Film and Television* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press 1991) and John Carlos Rowe and Richard Berg (eds) *The Vietnam War and American Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press 1991)
- 9 Gibson *Paramilitary culture* p. 90
- 10 Susan Jeffords *The Remasculinization of America: Gender and the Vietnam War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1989)

What has not been noted is how the films' response to this 'crisis' is built on and circumscribed by the conventions of virtually all Hollywood-style films. This is marked most fundamentally by the narrative and visual reconstitution of a heroic male subject, a prerequisite for which is the devaluation and abuse of the feminine. Within this context, we can move beyond discussions of the apparently different filmic approaches to Vietnam, for example, the 'right-wing' *Rambos* versus the 'liberal' *Coming Home*, and their superficial political contradictions, to an analysis of a more fundamental ideological function – that of the construction of a male subject-hero and a masculine spectator, even in the so-called 'postmodernist' chaos of Vietnam, even in the non-heroic character of the combat, even in the aftermath of knowledge about My Lai and other atrocities, even in defeat. As a consequence, we can begin to account for the films' consistent effacements of the issues of race, class, nationalism, and gender (their historical misrepresentations, we might say) by focusing on their all too conventional concern with the narrative and visual reconstitution of the male subject and their almost always violent repression of the feminine.

The Vietnam film and the discourse of war

We can broaden the focus of this inquiry into the Hollywood-style Vietnam film to encompass a further question: what makes these films not only like each other, and not only like other Hollywood films, but like other discourses of war as well? Klaus Theweleit's analysis of fascist Freikorps writings has drawn a great deal of attention and been of considerable help in recent discussions of the role gender difference plays in discourses of war. Theweleit's work will surface in this essay here and again, for in arguing with Theweleit (that is, both with and against him), we can begin to come to terms with the historical and the ahistorical in Hollywood's Vietnam war films, and specifically, its constituent appropriation of gender difference.

Considering the apparent dissimilarity between the writings of the Freikorps and the Hollywood films about Vietnam, we might begin by asking if Theweleit's work is at all applicable to an analysis of these films. The fascist writings exhibit an overt, apparently unrepressed sadomasochistic tone, while most of the Vietnam films present a humanistic, life-affirming veneer which values individual subjectivity above all else. Central to these differences is Theweleit's argument that in their 'preoccupation with large-scale politics . . . [with] the public and the social', the fascist writings 'attempt to avoid the private, the intimate, the individual . . .' According to Theweleit, the construction of an individualized male subjectivity is not a typical attribute of the Freikorps discourse.¹¹

¹¹ Klaus Theweleit *Male Fantasies*
Vol. 1 *Floods Bodies History*
trans. Stephen Conway in
collaboration with Erica Carter
and Chris Turner (Minneapolis:
University of Minnesota Press
1987) p. 88

In the Vietnam films, however, there is an especially strong concern with 'the private, the intimate, the individual' This is evident specifically in their deployment of an Oedipal narrative, a scenario Theweleit claims is virtually absent from the Freikorps writings This overriding concern with the Oedipal may distinguish the films in some sense from this particular set of fascist discourses, but it certainly does not distinguish them from the bulk of the Hollywood product Nor does it preclude their efforts at historical commentary Speaking about Hollywood films in general, Raymond Bellour once observed that

The American cinema . . . finds itself enacting . . . the most classic paradigms elaborated for the subject of Western culture by Freudian psychoanalysis *Its massive attempt to socio-historical representation is basically shaped by the type of subjectivity, whose logic was first recognized and imposed by psychoanalysis . . . a classic Oedipal scenario* . . . ¹² [emphasis added]

¹² Janet Bergstrom 'Alternation segmentation hypnosis an interview with Raymond Bellour' *Camera Obscura* no. 3-4 (1979) p. 93

The films' Oedipal configuration is evident, for example, in that unlike the Freikorps writings, the fictional soldier-subject in Vietnam is rarely represented as an adult, but rather as a boy whose war experiences form the backdrop for his coming to manhood, or for his passage into subjectivity (see especially *The Boys in Company C* [1978], *Go Tell the Spartans* [1978], *Platoon* [1986], *Hanoi Hilton* [1987], *Hamburger Hill* [1987], *Full Metal Jacket* [1987], and *Casualties of War* [1989]) ¹³ In a number of films, the attempt to critique US involvement in Vietnam is in fact circumscribed by representations of the military's exploitation of a naive youth, who finds himself struggling only to survive, not to win, the 'war' The threat to the soldier-subject is often represented in Oedipal terms as either a real or symbolic castration, exhibited, for example, in the fear of and often realized loss of limbs ¹⁴ Survival is frequently dependent on the maturation of the soldier-subject, which often includes the 'fragging' or some other symbolic death of the sergeant-and/or officer-father (as in *Apocalypse Now* [1979], *Platoon*, *Full Metal Jacket*, *Casualties of War*, *Off Limits* [1988])

¹³ For what it's worth this emphasis on youthful protagonists is commonly applauded by reviewers as an authentic view of the soldiers in Vietnam

¹⁴ This is evident in the overwhelming proportion of injured, paralysed and amputated legs in Vietnam films (see *Go Tell the Spartans*, *The Deer Hunter*, *Coming Home*, *Bat 21*, *Jackknife* [1988], *Born on the Fourth of July* and the sniper fire that concludes *Full Metal Jacket*)

More significantly, the soldier-subject's survival is almost always linked to his acquisition of knowledge and thus the uniqueness of his perspective – a perspective the willing spectator is positioned to share and which serves as the conduit for the films' political preoccupations In these films, no matter what their ostensible politics, they insist on the primacy of subjective experience, and specifically the primacy of the 'authentic' and authoritative experience of the male soldier-subject His political and moral judgements stand in for those of the film, thus functioning to conflate his identity with the nation as a whole

In most of the Vietnam films, this national identity is classically post-World War II, fashioned out of the liberation of Europe from

Casualties of War, (courtesy of
Columbia Pictures and BFI stills
archive)



its oppressors. The conventional GI realization in the Vietnam film that this 'isn't a John Wayne movie' does not only express disillusionment, it also distances the soldier-subject's, and thus the nation's, identity from the political corruption of the 'war', maintaining some sense of post-World War II ideological innocence.

For the Stallone and Norris films, the threat that 'successful Vietnamese resistance' posed to this identity is simply a result of US military defeat, and their films are John Wayne movies. But for the more 'serious' Vietnam films, the moral corruption of the US troops and the killing of women and children plague a national identity built on a World War II-style victory over fascism. Never is the threat to national identity given its proper neocolonial context, examined in light of US-based multinationals and their economic interests, of the corruption of foreign policy and the foreign policy apparatus by those interests, or of the specific military strategies which patently were not in the interests of the Vietnamese people (for example, the strategic hamlets programme) or which were arguably genocidal (such as the bombing of the North).¹⁵

As a result, the films' criticisms of 'the war in Vietnam' predominantly focus on *individual* cases of corruption and bureaucratic blundering. The films then merely have to provide a perspective that condemns individual cases of excess and malfeasance in order to reestablish the illusion of a 'democratic' national identity – one which fights for the underdog, saves women and children, and respects cultural and racial difference. As will become evident, this reestablishment of a democratic national identity is accomplished by the Oedipalization of the soldier-subject, a narrative process dependent on making the USA the underdog

¹⁵ *Apocalypse Now* would be a likely candidate for mounting this kind of criticism, since it is an adaptation of *Heart of Darkness*, which does broach the topic of economic and colonial interests. However, the film does not concern itself with these issues any more than other Hollywood films about US intervention in Vietnam.

and, through brutalizing images of women, portraying sexual and racial difference as a corrupting Other

The conflation of individual and national identity is most evident in the commonly used voice-over narrations in the Vietnam films ¹⁶ In *The Boys in Company C*, *Apocalypse Now*, *Platoon*, *Full Metal Jacket*, and *The Iron Triangle* (1988) the voice overs establish the primacy of the soldier-subject's perspective. They also construct an 'understanding' of Vietnam and the US presence there which precludes acknowledging the significance of the economic, the racial, and the sexual, thus controlling through discourse the threat 'Vietnam' poses to US political and cultural identity

Even in films where there is no voice-over narration, language often serves to distinguish the soldier as the film's subject and to authorize his perspective. *Good Morning, Vietnam* (1987) is possibly the best example of how the soldier-subject's identity can be established on the use of language. As the most popular voice on armed forces radio, Robin Williams' Sergeant Cronauer is a fantasy figure for the other disc jockeys, whose linguistic abilities pale in comparison. Each day he naively but insistently subjects Vietnam to the stateside discourse of the 'morning commute', or he paternalistically teaches English to the Vietnamese. Most significantly, Cronauer resists the censorship of the news, the film positioning his views as the 'truth' about the US presence in Vietnam, consequently, his identity is threatened – he is taken off the air

The image of woman

The difference in the treatment of male subjectivity between the fascist discourse Theweleit analyses and the Hollywood discourse on Vietnam might be partially explained by the historical context of production specific to each. The demand for pleasure necessitated by Hollywood's capital intensive mode of production would not be the same for the fascist writings of the Freikorps. As a consequence, the Hollywood-style narrative is more dependent on the Oedipal as a guarantor of pleasure

This connection between narrative, desire, and Oedipal pleasure is a recurrent theme in recent narrative theory, one which scholars have recognized as an indication of 'the inherent maleness of all narrative' ¹⁷ As Teresa De Lauretis argues,

the defining distinction which . . . narrative establishes is one of sexual difference, predicated on the *single* figure of the hero who crosses the boundary and penetrates the other space. In so doing the hero, the mythical subject, is constructed as human being and as male ¹⁸

¹⁶ Of course the perspective of the soldier subject is also generated by the use of point of view shots. This is so common it seems hardly worth mentioning. *Full Metal Jacket* is the only significant counter example: a film which is often seen as a critique of the cinematic deployment of male spectatorial pleasure. See Michael Pursell *Full Metal Jacket: The unravelling of patriarchy Literature/Film Quarterly* vol. 16 no. 4 (1988) pp. 218–25. Susan White 'Male bonding, Hollywood Orientalism and the repression of the feminine in Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket*' *Arizona Quarterly* vol. 44 no. 3 (1988) pp. 120–44. Michael Klein 'Historical memory, film and the Vietnam era' in Dittmar and Michaud *From Hanoi to Hollywood: The Vietnam War in American film* pp. 19–40 and Cynthia J. Fuchs 'Vietnam and sexual violence: the movie' unpublished paper.

¹⁷ Teresa De Lauretis *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984) p. 108.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 119.

De Lauretis also reduces 'the number and functions of . . . the *dramatis personae* to the two involved in the primary conflict of hero and antagonist (obstacle)'. De Lauretis argues that the 'obstacle' is not necessarily a woman, but it is necessarily 'female', as the passage of the hero into subjectivity involves 'entry into a closed space . . . interpreted as "a cave", "the grave", "a house", "woman" . . . whatever its personification [as] morphologically female' ¹⁹

The role of the female in this Oedipal configuration is similar to that in the Freikorps writings, even though Theweleit asserts that the Oedipal is virtually insignificant to them. Specifically, Theweleit draws on the work of Deleuze and Guattari, insisting that the Oedipal triangle is but one historically specific manifestation of the damming of desire, and thus that 'Freudian concepts have only a limited capacity for describing the psychophysical processes leading to the struggle to suppress female sexuality (and to suppress the productions of the unconscious in general)' ²⁰

Theweleit's rejection of the Oedipal in favour of the pre-Oedipal leads to a rejection of the role of castration anxiety in male subject constructions and a focus instead on a 'primal fear of dissolution'.²¹ As Barbara Ehrenreich notes in the book's foreword:

The Freikorpsmen hate women, specifically women's bodies and sexuality . . . This hatred – or dread – of women cannot be explained with Freud's all-purpose Oedipal triangulation . . . The dread arises in the pre-Oedipal struggle of the fledgling self, before there is even an ego to sort out the objects of desire and the odds of getting them. It is a dread, ultimately, of dissolution – of being swallowed, engulfed, annihilated. Women's bodies are the holes, swamps, pits of muck that can engulf ²²

Yet, despite the above differences in critical approaches to male subject construction, and the differences between fascist discourse and Vietnam film, the image of woman and of female sexuality is consistently represented in both as a threat or an obstacle to the integrity of the male subject. Theweleit provides countless examples of an unrepresed desire in the Freikorps writings to suppress and destroy the feminine, a desire which in the Vietnam films *is* represed yet still forms the foundation for the development of the male subjects.

With this in mind, we can see that language in the Vietnam film not only does some of the work in constituting male subjectivity, it also manifests a desire to destroy the feminine which is evident in discourses of war in general. This desire is often masked by its use in denaturing a *male* enemy, in making that enemy an Other. The significance of gender difference to this opposition between subject and Other, however, is betrayed by the language's invocation of the sexual (the fictional GI commonly yells 'Fuck you', as he shoots at

¹⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 118–19.

²⁰ Theweleit *Male Fantasies* Vol. I p. 258. Theweleit's rejection of the significance of the Oedipal seems to be motivated by recent attempts to displace what is now seen as the historically specific rather than universal character of the Oedipal. This theoretical move in the context of the writings he analyses has been questioned by Tania Modleski in 'A father is being beaten: male feminism and the war film' *Discourse* vol. 10 no. 2 (1988) p. 69. There is something peculiar in Theweleit's choosing to do battle with Oedipus in a study examining the fascist mentality of men who were prepared to die for their fatherland.

²¹ Barbara Ehrenreich 'Foreword to Theweleit *Male Fantasies* Vol. I p. xiv.

²² *Ibid.* p. xiii.

the Vietnamese). In the language of war, then, whether fascist discourse or Vietnam film, to make the enemy an Other is to make it symbolically female, and conversely, everything female is made the 'enemy' As Mary Daly observes

the secret bond that binds the warriors together . . . is the violation of women, acted out physically and constantly re-played on the level of language and of shared fantasies. . . . Thus the bonding of trained killers requires semantic degradation of women 23

23 Mary Daly, *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978) pp. 357–58

In *The Boys in Company C*, for example, the drill instructor demeans the recruits by calling them 'girls' In *Go Tell the Spartans*, the paternalistic Captain played by Burt Lancaster refers to a young Vietnamese girl suspected to be Vietcong as 'pussy' *The Deer Hunter*'s 'one shot', which defines De Niro's and all male superiority, is significant because 'two is pussy' In *Platoon*, new recruits are referred to as 'cherries' Most directly and self-consciously, *Full Metal Jacket* employs virtually the entire range of misogynist slang that has come to connote basic training and combat. The discursive excess, coupled with the film's other ironic strategies (such as its lack of identificatory point-of-view shots), offers a potentially subversive reading. Nonetheless, it is a reading that still operates within the orbit of an Oedipal narrative dynamic even if to confront it. In other words, the female is still exploited to shed light on the male confrontation with a male self.²⁴

24 Modleski's article makes a similar criticism of male feminism in the context of Theweleit's and other male critics' use of feminism and an image of woman to shed light on masculine identity

The language of bodily contamination that Theweleit describes as a threat to the male self also emerges in the Vietnam films Theweleit finds a strong connection in the Freikorps writings between the symbolic female body and 'dirt . . . slime . . . pulp . . . shit [and] rain'. In the Vietnam films, an allegedly realistic obscenity is deployed in failed attempts to describe Vietnam, and thus, to subject it to discourse. In *Full Metal Jacket*, for example, to be in Vietnam is to be in a 'world of shit', and the first words of *Apocalypse Now* are: 'Saigon. Shit.'

More significantly, this discourse of bodily contamination defines virtually all female characters in the films In Theweleit's analysis, women are directly threatening, as the communist 'Red nurse' prostitute or the 'castrating rifle-woman' (cf. *Full Metal Jacket*'s sniper); or they are indirectly threatening – sisterly and virginal – arousing potentially incestuous feelings and/or a desire for bodily contact which will contaminate the male self

The most familiar representation of women in Vietnam films is as (sometimes communist) prostitutes Superficially, prostitution in these films is a symbolic manifestation of a Vietnamese corruption which threatens the survival of the soldier-subject. This moral corruption is seen, either explicitly or implicitly, as endemic to Vietnam In *The Boys in Company C*, their first encounter with

25 Prostitution as symbolic of a (to western eyes) corrupted and corrupting Vietnam is not limited to fiction films. Two documentaries also deserve note here. In one, Michael Rubbo's *Sad Song of Yellow Skin* (1970) the voice-over narration symptomatically places a great deal of emphasis on prostitution in Vietnam, only momentarily noting the significance of the GI presence to this booming trade favouring a view of prostitution as a metaphor for Vietnam and its history. In the other, *Frantline* (1981) the narrator notes that 'Nowhere, not even in Saigon were Americans safe. This is followed by a cut to a Vietnamese woman leaning against a post in a stance which classically signifies prostitution (in fact, it is not at all clear that she is a prostitute). Two more shots of Vietnamese women follow, as the narrator intones about the danger of booby traps, snipers, grenades.'

26 White, 'Male bonding', p. 132.

Vietnam involves gleefully bargaining with an unseen whore, they are not even off the troop ship yet. The Saigon crime film, *Off Limits*, concerns a US officer's serial killing of prostitutes. The killings are a vehicle to represent metaphorically the conventional view that it was the corruption of officers and politicians that 'lost the war'.²⁵

In its narrative deployment, this portrayal of Vietnamese prostitution displaces the threat to the subject into the symbolics of the sexual, where it can more easily be subjected to discourse. The first shot of Vietnam in *Full Metal Jacket*, for example, is of the backside of a prostitute, with the song 'These Boots Are Made for Walking' as accompaniment. The threatening nature of Vietnam is thus first represented by a prostitute whose boots 'will walk all over you', the displacement of the threat of death into the sexual premised on the metonymy of the prostitute's 'boots' with those of the Vietcong. Thus, the construction and maintenance of the male subject is symbolized by distance and difference from the female and female sexuality (which, by its threatening nature, calls for its own annihilation).

As Susan White points out, Hollywood has its own kind of 'Orientalism', one which 'conflate[s] Eastern culture with corrupt sexuality, a degraded or treacherous femininity and male homoeroticism'.²⁶ Prostitution, therefore, is not the only form of female sexuality that threatens the male soldier-subject. In *The Iron Triangle*, for example, a 'treacherous' South Vietnamese propagandist is first referred to as 'a beautiful woman' by Captain Keane (Beau Bridges), the soldier-subject narrator. She is a woman who travels, and, as we discover shortly before her death, has sex with a French mercenary. Her death is brought about by Vietcong assassination, performed by the boyish Ho, who later becomes a comrade in arms with Keane. The gendered language of Keane's concluding voice over betrays the effacement of the female in the Vietnam films' humanist concern for the Other, a concern that exists as long as the Other is clearly recognized as male, and even further, as a male subject 'like me': 'I had come to understand that on the other side of the barrel of a gun there was a man, like me.'

The significance of 'degraded... femininity and male homoeroticism' is especially apparent in *The Deer Hunter*, most prominently in the opposition between the super-masculine heroics of De Niro's Michael and the implied homoerotic desire of Christopher Walken's more effeminate Nick. The connection between Vietnam and this 'corrupt sexuality' is further signified by the French 'gentleman' who introduces Nick to the Vietnamese roulette dens. Nick, of course, dies, banished from the text in an attempt to restore a final order. One might even see the much discussed ambiguity of the film's conclusion as generated from the inability for the text to provide for *both* the male hero's 'last-minute

rescue', which conventionally signifies the completion of an Oedipalized male subjectivity, and the suppression of the feminine, which is conventionally carried out by the culmination of a romantic male-female relationship.

The representation of a threatening female sexuality is so pervasive in fact that it is evident even where the women characters are primarily nonsexual. In *Good Morning, Vietnam*, for example, Trinh (Chintara Sukapatana) appears to provide an image of innocence antithetical to the all too familiar representation of Vietnam as morally void. But the difference is superficial; she nevertheless represents an Other that somehow must be subjected to discourse and the male subject's desire (teach her to speak English) and thus made safe. Even more significantly, Trinh's innocence is displaced on to her brother, Tuan, whom we later discover is Vietcong. Thus, her innocence disguises the threat of death posed to the film's soldier-subject, which is almost realized in Tuan's bombing of the restaurant Cronauer frequents.

In the earlier film *Go Tell the Spartans*, the capture of a Vietnamese family creates further tension between the naive, young Lieutenant (who wants to win their hearts and minds) and the wizened, patriarchal Sergeant (who suspects they are Vietcong). The threat of the family's foreignness is represented most significantly by the perceived sexuality of their virginal teenaged daughter: the Sergeant expresses his concern that the whole platoon will fall prey to sexual disease. The threat that she embodies is in fact finally realized: she escapes and ultimately leads a jungle ambush of the retreating US GIs.

Casualties of War portrays the criminal abduction, rape, and murder of a Vietnamese village girl. The 'casualties', however, are



Casualties of War, (courtesy of Columbia Pictures and BFI stills archive)

the male soldier-subjects, here represented by the psychological damage done to Private Eriksson (Michael Fox) because of his inability to rescue her. The girl herself is not a threat, but her presence is, which makes such a distinction practically irrelevant; specifically, whatever concern Eriksson shows for her during the abduction and rape threatens to make *him* a victim of murder as well. The character functions no differently, then, than the Vietnamese prostitutes in the other films, representing the threat of the feminine to the integrity of the male subject.

The invocation of female sexuality to represent the threat that the feminine poses to the soldier-subject is not always overt. Nonetheless, the male subjects' desire to destroy the female is often still overdetermined by a violent sexual imagery, specifically by the image of rape. In *Apocalypse Now*, for example, a woman in the village under attack by Colonel Kilgore lobs a grenade into a helicopter evacuating the wounded. She is hunted down, and following Kilgore's command to 'Put one up her ass', she is killed. In *Platoon*, the 'interrogation' of a village woman is metonymically related, via cross-cutting, to the rape of a village girl. Chris' decision to intervene in this act echoes the moral conflict between the two sergeant-fathers, inaugurating the tension between the two factions in the platoon that results in the death of all but Chris. In *Full Metal Jacket*, the greatest threat to the subject comes from the female sniper, whom he destroys as his comrades yell for him to 'Do her'.²⁷

Theory and the suppression of the feminine

Theweleit's analysis is undeniably valuable to an understanding of the image of woman in discourses of war. And yet, for Theweleit the female, ultimately, is not very important. Theweleit's selfconscious employment of the term fantasy (instead of phantasy) is the key to his displacement of the female as significant to fascist discourse. The use of the term indicates the manner in which the fascist writings seem to hide nothing, repress nothing, as if penned by a psychotic. These writings are not unconscious phantasies but overt fantasies of the destruction of women. For Theweleit, however, something must be hidden, some desire repressed, and this is the real focus of his analysis. Rather than women,

it is above all the aliveness of the real that threatens these men. The more intensely life (emotions) impinges on them, the more aggressively they attack it, rendering it 'harmless' in extreme cases.²⁸

Ultimately, Theweleit discards the opposition male-female altogether, not in order to see the violence instituted by such a

²⁷ The threat the female poses to the male soldier-subject is apparent even in the characterization of the women who are not and have never been in Vietnam. In the films about returning veterans, the authenticity of the GI's experience and the reconstitution of a masculine identity require the ultimate exclusion of women and female sexuality. The female characters' sexuality serves to define the male characters' psychological healing, or more precisely, his passage to subjecthood: the female is relegated to the role of obstacle and then overtly excluded. See Michael Selig, *Boys will be men: Oedipal drama in 'Coming home' in 'From Hanoi to Hollywood'* pp. 189–202 and *From play to film: 'Strange Snow', 'Jackknife' and masculine identity in the Hollywood Vietnam film* *Literature/Film Quarterly* vol. 20 no. 3 (1992).

²⁸ Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*, Vol. I, p. 217. This is even more evident in Volume II (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), which investigates *Male Bodies*. Fascism then waged its battle against human desires by encoding them with a particular set of attributes: with effeminacy, unhealthiness, criminality, Jewishness – all of which existed together under the umbrella of Bolshevism (p. 13). As is clear from the above quote, women are not even mentioned (except in the guise of effeminacy) and then as one in a series.

²⁹ See Jacqueline Rose, 'Where does misery come from?' psychoanalysis feminism and the event in Richard Feldstein and Judith Roof (eds) *Feminism and Psychoanalysis* (Ithaca Cornell University Press 1989)

³⁰ Theweleit *Male Fantasies* Vol 1 pp 221–2

³¹ Ehrenreich Foreword to Theweleit p xii

³² See Teresa De Lauretis *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1987) pp 1–30

³³ See Theweleit *Male Fantasies* Vol 1 pp 380–85 in Volume II Theweleit does quote Ingray on gender difference as multiplicities as opposed to unification (pp 105–107)

polarity²⁹, but to focus on some sense of nongendered 'sexuality', which makes it

seem grievously wrong to distinguish these sexualities according to the categories 'male' and 'female'. The sexuality of the patriarch is less 'male' than it is deadly, just as that of the subjected women is not so much 'female' as suppressed, devivified – though, sustaining less damage from its own work of suppression [?]¹, it also contains the more beautiful possibilities for the future ³⁰

For Theweleit, the feminine in fascist discourse is not woman, or real women, but rather symbolic of the ineffable forces of 'the living' (yet, once again) which threaten to dismember the order of patriarchy, and also, to save it

Hence, in Theweleit's analysis of the writings of the Freikorpsmen, what is threatening is the incessant 'flow' of life, of nature, of earthly states which threaten the boundaries of the body, of sexuality, and not really women, just what women represent. The violent suppression of that threat therefore is not really about the violent suppression of women but of sexuality, of the living

Theweleit's desire, then, is for the fascist writings to express in some fashion an essential, ahistorical, 'irreducible human [sic] desire'.³¹ As a consequence, the body, and especially the female body, the body of the (m)Other, is displaced in favour of the essence it represents – life, chaos, emotion, the letting loose of Deleuze's desiring-production. What Theweleit seems unable finally to confront is the possibility that what is irreducible is the violence imposed on female bodies by men, a violence that is real, a violence sanctioned by its historical manifestation in a discourse controlled by men, including theory, including ultimately Theweleit's analysis.³² In these discourses, women appear not only as Other but as something other than what they are – as 'territory of desire' in one section of Theweleit's book, for example – and it is always men who speak, and not just fascists, but also those writers who do give voice to what Theweleit sees as desiring-production ³³

We should therefore question Theweleit's appropriation of a 'feminist' position – a position that 'refuse[s] to concede to castration and to the father a central and determining role'. We should question it for two related reasons: first, for its tendency nonetheless to essentialize the categories of psychoanalysis; and second, for its displacement of both the image of woman and real women, that is, for its too easy elision of the reality of discourse, and specifically the reality of historically constructed gender difference

In their attempts to criticize the 'war', the Vietnam films consciously construct what appear to be life-affirming fantasies expressed in the commonly repeated soldier-subject's concern with mere survival (and, for that matter, in the superficial expressions of

remorse over the deaths of the native population – in *Platoon*, *Apocalypse Now*, *Off Limits*, *Bat 21* [1988], and *Casualties of War*). This concern with survival contrasts significantly with the fascist writings Theweleit records, which show only a concern for victory or death.

The Vietnam films would seem, therefore, to express the very opposite of the fascist discourse Theweleit analyses. But in fact, the Vietnam film represses what the fascist writings do not. Whereas the fascist discourse is so overt in its fantasies of the destruction of women that Theweleit must turn away, must look elsewhere for its motivation, the Vietnam films manifest their woman-hating and woman-destroying covertly, more as unconscious Oedipal phantasy. However, the understanding offered by criticism of the operation of Oedipus in the films' narratives does not fully uncover the dialectic of masculine desire and fear that the Vietnam film both expresses and represses.

The author's versus the spectator's desire

For Theweleit, the focus of his analysis is on the author of the fascist discourse, that is on the author's desire which produces these writings. For us, the focus should be on the spectator's desire because the films do not exist without 'him'. I mean this not only in the theoretical context of the spectator 'constructing the text' (or the text being constructed for a masculine spectator), but also in the economic context of the films' production which requires that the films produce an audience as well as a story. In turn, this audience also produces and responds to a range of discourses: newspaper and magazine reviews and articles, Oscars and Golden Globes, college courses on the films and the 'war', and so on. The question, then, is not only one of what 'unconscious' motivates the authoring of the discourse of war, but what 'unconscious' motivates the spectator, not just to see once, a single viewing of a single film, but to see again, to return for yet another film about Vietnam, and to read about them (and to study them), to ceaselessly embark on this particular unending rehearsal of masculine desire.

In order to investigate this spectatorial desire, we can return to Theweleit's analysis, and specifically to the notion that the fascist writings express not only the desire to destroy the living (woman) but also the compulsion to return to the pre-Oedipal state – a desire to relive the lost bond and the flow of life between bodies without boundaries. According to Theweleit

They want a contact with the opposite sex – or perhaps simply access to sexuality itself – which cannot be *named*, a contact in which they can dissolve themselves (while forcibly dissolving the other sex)

What we have here is a desire for, and fear of, fusion, explosion . . . [that] cannot simply be reduced to the concept of 'castration anxiety' What we encounter instead is a fear of total annihilation and dismemberment ³⁴

The desire for death (of women, of oneself) follows the writings' representations of sexuality, death will put an end to this dialectic of desire and fear

This restitution of order out of chaos, this damming of the life-flow of 'desiring-production', does not appear in the same manner in the Hollywood Vietnam films The films in fact embrace emotion (that which is so threatening in the Freikorps writings) as that which is 'irreducibl[y] human' There is no *consciously* expressed fantasy of destruction and death by the soldier-subject, though there is a fear of and desire for a 'fusion' of bodies operating in these films, a fear and desire which culminates in death But this dialectic is given over to the experience of the spectator more so than that of the films' protagonists (After all, the appeal of spectacular combat is greater for the viewers of these films than for the protagonists).

In fact, unlike the Freikorps authors and their protagonists, in the Vietnam films the fictional soldier-subject's fear of and desire for 'fusion' with the body of the (m)Other – that is, to be in Vietnam, to be 'in the shit' – is usually quickly regretted (see, for example, *Platoon*, *Apocalypse Now*, *The Boys in Company C*, and *Full Metal Jacket*) The spectator's desire to be 'in the shit', however, continues for the length of the film, and again for the length of the next Vietnam film 'he' attends This is the 'unconscious' fantasy that needs analysis; these are the films' repressed contents

One way in which the spectator's dialectic of fear and desire is mobilized is by the ambivalent gaze of the soldier-subject, which characterizes the visualizing of prostitutes in many of the films *Full Metal Jacket*, *Off Limits*, and *The Iron Triangle*, for example, offer images of female sexuality which invoke both fear of and desire for the sexualized (Asian) Other In *Off Limits* and *The Iron Triangle*, the dialectic of fear and desire prompted by these images is closed off with the murder of the prostitutes and the propagandist, respectively In *Full Metal Jacket*, it is displaced onto the sniper, who also is murdered. In these films, the spectator is vicariously offered the same pleasures as the murderer – to take the woman's sex and then kill her

In *Casualties of War*, this ambivalent gaze is evident in the scene of the village girl's rape, viewed in long shot through misty rain over the shoulder of Michael Fox, who faces the camera The viewer's desire is encouraged to match that of the soldier-subject, wanting to see/participate in the rape and also fearing such a sight/participation The dialectic is provisionally put to rest by a woman's death, a

death resulting from the (in)action of the soldier-subject, a death viewed via point-of-view shots from his perspective.

In the absence of women characters, the soldier-subject's and the spectator's ambivalent gaze is turned on Vietnam itself, on a landscape which, as it recalls an image of the female, is viewed as both threatening and exotic – desirably Other. The country seems to be all jungle, often fed by rivers – a warm, moist, 'closed space'. This representation of Vietnam's landscape justly fits into the pattern of 'morphologically female' images De Lauretis notes as 'obstacles' to the male's passage to subjectivity 'entry into a closed space, "a cave", "a grave" . . .'. Similarly, Tania Modleski, in discussing Theweleit, notes how images of the ' "swamp" "streams" . . . dirt, mire, the morass, slime, pulp, shit, rain, and floods . . . [are] a powerful evocation of the maternal/feminine as that which threatens the integrity of the subject . . .'³⁵ whether that threat is one of castration or of 'total dissolution'.

The landscape is especially important to the threatened loss of identity in *Apocalypse Now* and *Rambo: First Blood, Part II* (1985), where the soldier-subject is performing an 'intelligence' mission in the deep, dark Vietnamese jungle, and his disappearance or capture will remain secret, as if he never existed. This landscape characterizes as well the alleged realism of a film like *Platoon*, prompting David Halberstam's symptomatic remark in *Time*'s cover article on the film 'You can see how the forest sucks in American soldiers; they just disappear.'³⁶ In *Casualties of War*, especially in the early sequence of Eriksson's nightmare, his legs are swallowed up by the earth when an artillery attack creates an opening to a Vietcong tunnel beneath him. Further, the earth becomes a 'vagina dentata', as a Vietcong approaches the lower half of Eriksson's body with a knife in his teeth. In *The Iron Triangle*, the title refers to a particular area of the jungle, which as the voice-over narration tells us, 'looks like paradise . . . but [it is] the bloodiest corner on the Ho Chi Minh Trail', a language which brings to mind nothing if not masculine desire mingled with fear of the woman's sex.

Even the representation of urban locales often emphasizes dark, wet, enclosed spaces. In the Saigon crime film *Off Limits* and in *The Deer Hunter*, the city is composed of dark and crowded bars and rooms, where prostitutes ply their trade, or where Vietnamese gamble on human lives. Everyone is wet with sweat or the Vietnamese monsoon rains. In *Full Metal Jacket*, where the representation of urban locales seemed to authenticate the film's Vietnam experience for some critics, the final threatened loss of self is played out by the (literally) lost troops in the enclosed ruins of a Vietnamese village, where they are subject to attack from the female sniper.

That these landscapes correspond to both De Lauretis' mythic Oedipal configuration of gender difference in narrative and

³⁵ Modleski: 'A Father is being beaten' pp. 68–69.

³⁶ Richard Corliss et al.: *Platoon* 'Vietnam the way it really was' *Time* 26 Jan 1987 p. 57.

Modleski's pre-Oedipal 'maternal/feminine' should make us wonder if the consistent presence of the female image transcends the theoretical difference we construct between these two states. Or, maybe, the presence of this type of female image calls for us to recognize how the language of psychoanalytic discourse makes it difficult for the feminist, especially the so-called male feminist, to relinquish the theoretically 'central and determining role' of the father and the masculine. At the very least, maybe we should attempt to understand the possible insignificance of a distinction between the Oedipal and the pre-Oedipal for an understanding of the role gender difference plays in the discourse of war (certainly not an insignificant discourse of masculine subjectivity)

It seems to make little difference whether we assert that the dread the war discourse expresses is premised on the Oedipal threat of castration or on the pre-Oedipal dissolution of self, for whatever is threatening is represented as feminine, and the soldier-subject (fictional protagonist and spectator alike) respond with a desire and a fear that demands the 'death' of the female. For this reason, Theweleit's insistence on not limiting the analysis to the Oedipal is worth considering, not to shift the focus to the pre-Oedipal in order to discover something essential about desire (and certainly not to displace historically constructed gender difference), but in order to understand what we are in fact only capable of understanding – the historical and narrative *expressions* of desire, and our gendered relationship to them. The concern over whether this is a manifestation of the Oedipal or the pre-Oedipal might in fact be viewed as a diversion from confronting the reality of a history of male-controlled discourse which seems wholly inimical to women, in favour of a search for the essential, and ahistorical, generative mechanism(s) for (male) desire.

I recall that in discussing a failure of psychoanalysis for 'men in feminism', Stephen Heath suggests that 'perhaps men need to work out this not-simply-Oedipal complex of division'.³⁷ In fact, in this volume of writings there is a call for men to write about themselves, their desires, as when Alice Jardine quotes Helen Cixous, in saying that 'Men still have everything to say about their own sexuality'.³⁸

Postscript: my/critical desire

I have just read Kaja Silverman on the manner in which 'historical trauma', and in particular war, can lead to a crisis in male subjectivity, 'a loss of belief in . . . the adequacy of the male subject'.³⁹ Although she discusses only the post-World War II film and the 'trauma' of returning veterans, especially injured veterans, her analysis of the manner in which the films attempt to reinstate

³⁷ Stephen Heath 'Male feminism' in Alice Jardine and Paul Smith *Men in Feminism* (New York: Methuen, 1987) p. 22. To give Theweleit his due, and to mark a dilemma in facing these issues it should be noted that Theweleit focuses on male sexuality (his own sexuality in a way). The question is: can a male critic avoid somehow using women or effacing them to discuss male sexuality making women only a part of a (male?) discourse that critiques the violence and exclusionary tactics of male discourse?

³⁸ Alice Jardine 'Men in feminism: odor di uomo or compagnons de route?' Jardine and Smith: *Men in Feminism* p. 60.

³⁹ Kaja Silverman 'Historical trauma and male subjectivity' in E. Ann Kaplan (ed.) *Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (New York: Routledge, 1990) p. 118.

the 'dominant fiction' of the phallic male subject is especially appropriate to the 'post-Vietnam era' and, as we have seen, the films' conflation of political ideology and male subjectivity. More significantly, Silverman alludes to the critical writing on the post-World War II films, noting the symptomatic eruptions in them of the significance of gender difference, a significance the critics themselves never quite grasp.

In this essay, I have also alluded to critical discourses which surround the films, or more precisely, to a critical desire that is generated from the conjunction of the Vietnam films and history – not just the history of the 'war', but also the history of a highly politicized academic film criticism (and the impact of that 'war' on criticism), as well as the history of the Hollywood film industry. The question is: how do these writings participate in a discourse about Vietnam, a discourse which, like the films, struggles to maintain the 'dominant fiction' of a controlling male subjectivity, a discourse which in fact conflates the critic's subjectivity with political ideology?

I have neither the resources nor the space here to do any more than note some suspicions and raise some questions. As a male critic, I am wary of my own desire to explain (or explain away) my investment in the films, or in the production of my own criticism. I began this essay by discussing the two most common critical approaches to the Vietnam films – one which attempts to discover their generic similarities, the other which laments their inaccurate historicizing. Neither approach attempts to confront the desire the films generate. However, both attempt to subject the films' production of desire to discourse, much as the Vietnam films themselves attempt to subject to discourse the threat to political identity posed by Vietnam. This effort to contain the films – to explain them away, to put them, like the war, 'behind us' – is consistently thwarted, and not only by the production of yet more Vietnam films, or even by the serialization (and now syndication) of Vietnam on TV. This struggle to control desire through discourse brings to mind the critical impasse Jacqueline Rose notes: 'The impossibility of delimiting the object becomes – the impossibility of theory itself of controlling its object, that is, of knowing it.'⁴⁰ The provisional halt death brings to the dialectic of fear and desire in the writings of the fascist soldier-subject is available to the critic only between the moment one film ends and the critic begins to write – to write away 'his' investment with a distance that proclaims these films do not speak to 'his' desire.

I look back at the beginning of this writing and I see a language that Theweleit would recognize, a language that speaks fear, that denies desire. 'We are faced with trying to stem the tide...' My language here reflects what now seems a critical necessity. I confront Theweleit, one man's writing challenging another's in an aggressive

⁴⁰ Jacqueline Rose, 'Where does misery come from?' pp. 33–4.

critical act that is supposed to be somehow 'about' feminism. And for all my effort to displace the centrality of the Father, I continue to grant a central place to a man's criticism which ultimately displaces both the discursive and the real violence done to women in the name of war. I continue to grant a central place to a writing which uses 'feminism' (even as it seems to displace women) to reinstate the 'dominant fiction' of psychoanalysis. But can I honestly explain what desire gets me to watch these films? Or what desire keeps me writing? Possibly it's my own investment in making the critical act 'capture' meaning (my own war game), in making theory, in Theweleit's words, 'an instrument that etches order into meaning'.⁴¹

⁴¹ Theweleit *Male Fantasies*
Vol. II p. 51

Scenarios of exposure in the practice of everyday life: women in the cinema of attractions

CONSTANCE BALIDES

(All illustrations in this article appear courtesy of the Paper Print Collection, Library of Congress)

A Windy Day on the Roof



In *What Happened on Twenty-Third Street, New York City* (Edison, 1901) a man and woman walk down a busy city street. As the woman passes over a grated vent in the sidewalk escaping air blows her skirt up around her knees. In *What Demoralized the Barber Shop* (Edison, 1901) two women (or men dressed as women) stand at the top of the stairs that lead to a basement barber shop and lift

- 1 The films discussed in this paper are held in the Paper Print Collection Motion Picture Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division Library of Congress (Washington DC Set Kemp R Niver *Early Motion Pictures: the Paper Print Collection in the Library of Congress* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1985) for descriptions of films in the collection. Thanks to the staff in the Motion Picture Division for their very helpful assistance, and especially Madeline Matz.
- 2 American Mutoscope and Biograph Company (AM and B Picture Catalogue 1st ed (New York: AM and B, November 1902) p. 63. The tradition of living pictures is discussed by John Hagan in 'Erotic tendencies in film 1900-1906' in Roger Holman (comp.) *Cinema 1900-1906: An Analytical Study by the National Film Archive (London) and the International Federation of Film Archives* vol. 1 (Brussels: Federation Internationale des Archives du Film, 1982) pp. 231-238 and early erotic film displays are discussed by Judith Mayne in 'Uncovering the female body' in John L. Fell et al. *Before Hollywood: Turn-of-the-Century American Film* (New York: Hudson Hills Press in association with the American Federation of Arts, 1987) pp. 63-67.
- 3 For a feminist debate on Méliès' fascination with the female form see Lucy Fischer 'The Lady vanishes: women, magic and the movies' in John L. Fell (ed.) *Film Before Griffith* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983) pp. 339-354 and Linda Williams 'Film body: an implantation of perversions' *Cine tracts* vol. 3 no. 4 (1981) pp. 19-35.
- 4 In the films I have been able to view, black women are occasionally represented but in a racist way that assumes they are an inappropriate object of white male desire, for example in *A Kiss in the Dark* (AM and B, 1904).

their skirts to reveal their legs and striped stockings. Pandemonium ensues as the men in the shop below attempt to get a better look. In the *Gay Shoe Clerk* (Edison, 1903) a female chaperone and customer enter a shoe shop. In an insert close up of the female customer's foot and lower leg, the male clerk ties the laces of the woman's new shoe in an agitated manner as her skirt is raised to show a white petticoat and stockinged leg. Finally, in *A Windy Day on the Roof* (AM and B, 1904) a woman is hanging laundry on the roof of her tenement building while a man is painting the side of the building below. The wind blows the woman's clothing, which enables the painter to look up her skirt.¹

In this catalogue of what appears to be a case of the Freudian fetish, a male fascination with women's ankles and raised skirts is less surprising than the situations in which these scenes of exposure occur. Walking on a city street, going shopping, and hanging laundry are everyday activities, and in these films women perform the various tasks of daily life. The everyday, however, becomes the narrative context for turning women characters into spectacles.

That women should be constructed as sexual spectacles, even in very early cinema, is not in itself surprising. A market in pornography existed during the Victorian era, and pornographic films, sometimes taking the form of tableaux vivants (or 'living pictures' with 'strong poses' as they are described in early film catalogues), drew on a tradition of nineteenth-century entertainments. Risqué spectacles, moreover, are an important part of the thematic repertoire of early cinema.²

Both pornographic and erotic films from this period justify the display of women by relying on the pretext of a theatrical performance or out of the ordinary situation. In *The Pouting Model* (AM and B, 1902) two female pages dressed in leotards open the curtains of a side show to reveal a tableau of a naked woman who is being painted by a clothed male artist, and in *Trapeze Disrobing Act* (Edison, 1901) a female acrobatic performer partially disrobes while swinging on a trapeze in a vaudeville theatre as male onlookers, country rubes, watch from a balcony. Méliès, whose films often play on the appearance and disappearance of characters, uses the situation of a magician's act to show a woman's clothing being removed in *Les Apparitions Fugitives* (Méliès, 1904).³

In contrast to these theatrical situations, in the films whose descriptions open this paper it is the public visibility of the female characters *per se* – sometimes enhanced by an accidental incident – that provides the sketchy narrative justification for display. In this paper I analyse such films from the United States before 1907 in which women – frequently white, working-class women⁴ – are sexualized in scenarios of everyday life. Certainly this representation could be assessed in terms of its continuity with a long line of objectified images of women, and the fetishism of the female body

in some of the films could be explained in terms of the compensatory mechanisms of the male psyche regarding castration. The approach I take in this paper, however, is more precisely historical and is motivated by the following question: how was this everyday visibility of women possible?

The elaboration of a reply – as film analysis and film history – involves both historicizing theoretical arguments about space in film, especially the issue of narrative space, and delineating a discursive field within which the films discussed would have made sense. In an attempt to avoid an analysis that looks at ‘what the text says *truly* beneath what it *really* says’ in favour of one that assesses ‘the statement in the exact specificity of its occurrence’, to quote Michel Foucault⁵, films are placed alongside historical discussions of two key issues, prostitution and sexual harassment. One (although, of course, not the only) way to analyse the intelligibility of these films – the social sense they make – is to discuss them in relation to other historical sites in which the visibility of women as sexual in the context of the everyday was being produced

Sexualizing everyday life

Recent film scholarship stresses that early or ‘primitive cinema’ (up to 1907) is a particular regime of representation and cinema practice and not a rudimentary precursor of a later classical Hollywood style (from 1917). This work is characterized by a precise historical attention to the early period, and films are analysed for their distinct visual strategies, formal organization, and type of spectatorial involvement, as well as their specific exhibition contexts.⁶ For Tom Gunning early cinema is an exhibitionist cinema organized around ‘presenting a series of views’, and it ‘displays its visibility’ in a way that directly solicits the attention of spectators.⁷ Gunning historicizes these formal qualities by linking them to the investment in shocks and thrills in other contemporary popular entertainments such as magic theatre and amusement parks. These characteristics contrast with classical Hollywood cinema’s concern for narrative coherence and its use of strategies that invite a more absorbed attention from the spectator. Indeed, Gunning and André Gaudreault highlight the difference of the early period by referring to it as the ‘cinema of attractions’.⁸

Given the particular meanings that adhere to women’s bodies in social life as well as representation, the attraction of women within the cinema of attractions will have political implications over and above those of a general – though certainly historical – conception of exhibitionism. Judith Mayne distinguishes between various kinds of display arguing that while the altnenty of early cinema Gunning describes is apparent in some films, in others there is a traditional

5 Michel Foucault: ‘The discourse of history’ in Sylvère Lotringer (ed.) *Foucault Live (Interviews 1966–1984)* trans. John Johnston (New York: Semiotext(e), 1989) p. 21 and Michel Foucault: *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language* trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972) p. 28

6 There is a large body of work on early cinema, some of which is cited throughout this paper. For an extensive overview, see Charles Musser: *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1990)

7 Tom Gunning: ‘The cinema of attraction: early film, its spectator and the avant garde’ *Wide Angle* vol. 8 nos. 3–4 (1986) p. 64. Also see Tom Gunning: ‘An aesthetic of astonishment: early film and the (in)credulous spectator’ *Art and Text* vol. 34 (1989) pp. 31–45

8 The term ‘cinema of attractions’ was introduced by Gunning and André Gaudreault in a paper ‘Cinema des premiers temps: un défi à l’histoire du cinéma?’ given at Cerisy in 1985. In ‘The cinema of attraction’ Gunning uses the term to describe films until 1906/1907, dates that are revised to 1903/1904 in his later article ‘An aesthetic of astonishment’

- 9 Judith Mayne, *The Woman at the Keyhole: Feminism and Women's Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 166

- 10 For a discussion of the single-shot narrative, a dominant genre until 1903, see Tom Gunning 'Non-continuity, continuity, discontinuity: a theory of genres in early films', in Thomas Elsaesser with Adam Barker (eds), *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative*, pp. 86–94

- 11 Linda Williams, 'Film body: an implantation of perversions', pp. 33, 26, 24



Getting Strong

- 12 Not all exercising films are risqué. There are more straightforward demonstrations in *Physical Culture Girl* No. 3 (AM and B, 1903) and in a *floating School Gym* (AM and B, 1904), despite the suggestive title.
- 13 The sight of his exposed body may well have produced an unintended pleasure for female spectators. Minam Hansen discusses such an unexpected female response to 'The Corbett Fitzsimmons Fight' (Vuescribe, 1897) in terms of the importance of the public nature of cinematic reception for an alternative public sphere. See Minam Hansen, *Babe and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).

(classical) orchestration of the woman's body as object of the look of a male subject, a gendered duality in which the woman is 'capable of possessing a look only when that look solicits the attention of a male viewer'.⁹

The point to stress is that sexual difference is inscribed in film representation early on and that women become a certain kind of attraction in the cinema of attractions. This can be illustrated by three films that take exercising as their 'topic', *Getting Strong* (AM and B, 1904), *Physical Culture Lesson* (AM and B, 1906), and *Al Treloar in Muscle Exercises* (AM and B, 1905), as well as *What Happened on Twenty-Third Street, New York City* (all of which are single shot narratives).¹⁰ These films are the most explicit inheritors of what Linda Williams identifies as the protocinematic in Eadweard Muybridge's studies of motion in the 1870s and 1880s in which the 'supposedly scientific study' of human movement is organized in terms of sexual difference. Williams argues that in these photographic studies, women are 'already fictionalized' and their bodies, through a particular use of mise-en-scène, are invested with a 'diegetic surplus of meaning'.¹¹

In *Getting Strong* two women in nightclothes enter a bedroom to find a third woman seated at a dressing table combing her hair. The two women instruct the third in the art of exercising, and they help her remove her dress and corset so that she, too, can exercise without the constraint of her street clothes. In *Physical Culture Lesson* a man demonstrates exercises to a woman in a bedroom. Both characters remain clothed, although the woman does reveal her stockinged legs. Between exercises she goes to a dressing table to powder her nose. Physical proximity produces the necessary incentive for transforming the situation from one of instruction to one of romance, and the film ends with the couple kissing. If the art of exercising is given a 'surplus of meaning' by locating the activity in a suggestive location – the bedroom – in both films the display quotient adhering to the female body is increased by showing the women attending to their physical appearance. The mise-en-scène and use of props contribute to producing these situations as erotic.

By contrast in *Al Treloar in Muscle Exercises*, Treloar appears wearing exercising trunks and performs on an undecorated stage. While the display of his body is surprisingly revealing, it does not involve undressing as it does for the woman in *Getting Strong* or exposing a concealed part of the body as in *Physical Culture Lesson*.¹² A didactic quality of Treloar's performance is reinforced by the use of a stand with changing display cards (associated with vaudeville) indicating the type of exercise Treloar is demonstrating – and he periodically glances at these cards to ensure proper coordination with his movements. The authority of Treloar's social status as a physical culturist is reinforced by the mise-en-scène, which makes his display a demonstration of his skill.¹³



Getting Strong

14 Mayne, *The Woman at the Keyhole*, p. 163.



Getting Strong

15 These elements, for example, are present in the actuality film, *At the Foot of the Flatiron* (AM and B, 1903), which also makes use of the wind, but not for the purpose of sexual display.

16 Hansen, *Babel and Babylon*, p. 34.

17 Hansen, *Babel and Babylon*, p. 39.



Physical Culture Lesson



Physical Culture Lesson

What Happened on Twenty-Third Street, New York City most explicitly raises the issue of the sexual display of a female character in the context of everyday life. The comic gag that ends in revealing a woman's legs involves rudimentary stereotyping (a stout woman in plain street clothes walks near but not over the grate) and the use of mise-en-scene to highlight the display (the woman in the gag wears a frilly light coloured dress, which both makes her stand out as she comes into view and provides a strong contrast with her dark stockings). The film is structured around the incident of display, in which, as Mayne points out, the woman's body is 'set in place in a chain of motions not her own' in a narrative of display and concealment.¹⁴ Mayne further suggests that the everyday location has the effect of naturalizing this narrativization.

In addition to the woman's exposed legs, however, there are displays of another kind in *What Happened On Twenty-Third Street, New York City*. The use of location shooting on a well known street, the general view of everyday life in the modern metropolis – a busy city street with pedestrians and traffic – and an acknowledgement of the fact of filming through characters' looks to the camera are displays associated with actuality films.¹⁵ Miriam Hansen argues that one of the consequences of the exhibitionism in the cinema of attractions is an address that is 'predicated on diversity, on distracting the viewer with a variety of competing spectacles, which has the effect of soliciting the viewer, as a member of an anticipated social audience . . .'.¹⁶ *What Happened on Twenty-Third Street, New York City*, in holding a number of attractions in place, is an example of the textual inscription of such a diversity.

This is a further illustrated in the different implications of characters' glances in the direction of the camera. Hansen argues that one effect of the woman's look is to produce a 'modicum of distance between the performer and her objectified image. . .'.¹⁷ The woman's look is clearly tied to her sexual display, and for Hansen and Mayne this involves different implications. The looks of other characters cannot be solely understood in these terms. The glances of two men who walk in diagonally crossed paths after the display has occurred as well as that of a boy who enters from the foreground at the end of the film can be read as a more general comment on filming *per se* in keeping with the implications of such looks to the camera in actualities.

A relationship between the attractions of sexual display and actuality filming is also established in the advertising for the film. *What Happened on Twenty-Third Street, New York City* is included in the 'humorous' category in a 1902 film catalogue, *Edison Films*. It is described in a way that capitalizes on its association with an actuality film, which is taken to further enhance the display of the woman:

In front of one of the large newspaper offices on that



Al Treloar in Muscle Exercises

18 *Edison Films*, no. 135 (September 1902), p. 86 in Charles Musser et al. *Motion Picture Catalogs by American Producers and Distributors, 1894-1908*. A Microfilm Edition (Frederick, Md: University Publications of America, 1985).



Al Treloar in Muscle Exercises

thoroughfare is a hot air shaft through which immense volumes of air is forced by means of a blower. Ladies in crossing these shafts often have their clothes slightly disarranged (it may be said much to their discomforture). As our picture was being made a young man escorting a young lady, to whom he was talking very earnestly, comes into view and walks slowly along until they stand directly over the air shaft. The young lady's skirts are suddenly raised to, you might say an almost unreasonable height, greatly to her horror and much to the amusement of the newsboys, bootblacks and passersby.¹⁸

The location is identified as a real one where ladies have been subjected to the vagaries of wind currents. There is a stress on the accidental, if fortuitous, situation in which the cameraman was able to catch this commonplace occurrence with the implication that the event was not staged (against what appears to be the textual evidence for such a claim). In a masculine nod to the male reader/exhibitor contained in the parenthetical remarks ('it may be said . . .' and 'you might say . . .'), there is also a speculation on the extent of exposure ('an almost unreasonable height'). Diversity in this case reinforces the assumption of an appeal to a masculine audience. The display of the woman occurs in the everyday just as it might do in real life, foregrounding the sexual nature of women's public presence.

From the hindsight of the Marilyn Monroe sequence in *Seven Year Itch* (Wilder, 1955) that replays the scenario of vent, air, and exposure, the situation of the comic gag in *What Happened on Twenty-Third Street, New York City* might have the familiarity of the return of the repressed to a contemporary spectator. Such a whiggish response, however, loses a sense of the fabrication of the situation of display in the film. Indeed all manner of everyday situation is exploited in films of the period to the end of exposing a woman's body or some illicit sexual situation or both.

Workplace locations are used, especially ones requiring physical proximity between men and women, for example, between a female manicurist and a male client in the film. *In a Manicure Parlor* (AM and B, 1902) and between a female secretary and her male boss in *The Broker's Athletic Typewriter* (AM and B, 1905). Other work situations involve the display of female bodies, such as a corset shop in *The Way to Sell Corsets* (AM and B, 1904) and in *A Busy Day for the Corset Model* (AM and B, 1904)¹⁹; a photographer's studio in *One Way of Taking a Girl's Picture* (AM and B, 1904) and *Animated Picture Studio* (AM and B, 1903), in which a dancing woman is filmed for a moving picture; and a department store in *Four Beautiful Pairs* (AM and B, 1904).

Exercising is not the only activity, moreover, to be mined for its risqué potential. Women are shown getting undressed in front of

19 The description of this film in *Niver, Early Motion Pictures*, p. 43 somewhat exaggerates the extent of undressing by the models.

²⁰ The title of this film in the AM and B production records is *Having Her Gown Fitted*. See Niver *Early Motion Pictures* p 135

²¹ For a discussion of punitive endings, see Noel Burch *Life to Those Shadows* (trans. and ed. Ben Brewster (Berkeley: University of California Press 1990). Gunning discusses stop motion substitution and the substitution splice in Melies films in Tom Gunning *Primitive cinema – a frame up? or the tricks on us* *Cinema Journal* vol 28 no 2 (1989) pp 3–12

²² Stephen Heath 'Narrative space' in *Questions of Cinema* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd 1981) pp 19–75

windows as men pass outside in *As Seen on the Curtain* (AM and B, 1904) and *Pull Down the Curtains*, *Susie* (AM and B, 1904); being fitted for a dress by seamstresses in *Her New Party Gown* (AM and B, 1903)²⁰, walking on the street in *What Demoralized the Barber Shop* and *Love in the Suburbs* (AM and B, 1903); shopping for shoes in the *Gay Shoe Clerk* or for an adjustable reclining chair in *The Adjustable Bed* (AM and B, 1905); and doing housework in *A Windy Day on the Roof*

I am not arguing that the films constitute a 'genre', such as keyhole films, or that they can be grouped around a particular formal strategy, such as characters' looks to the camera. Most of the films are single shot narrative comedies with physical gags and punitive endings in which prurient male voyeurs are chastised. Others are erotic displays that rely more on situation and mise-en-scene. Some incorporate erotic display with cinematic tricks such as 'stop motion substitution'.²¹ While the flimsy justification for display, moreover, could be viewed as simply quaint and comic (or as a sign of desperation from a patriarchal unconscious), my focus in this paper is on the way the inappropriateness of these scenarios of exposure is articulated in spatial terms.

By making the space of the everyday the place of display of women's bodies or some unexpected sexual intimacy, the films produce everyday space as something other, something else besides a location for the practice of everyday life. In *What Happened on Twenty-Third Street, New York City* this is heightened by the fact that display occurs on a city street. In all these films, however, the everyday becomes a particular kind of space

Space and place

The formulation that space takes place in film is used by Stephen Heath to theorize the implications of narrative space in classical Hollywood cinema. For Heath narrative involves a process of centring in the orchestration of film space and in the spectator's relationship to it. Space becomes place through the continual inscription of the spectator in the diegetic world of the film, which is effected through the spectator's identification with the camera and with the looks of characters. This process is likened to perspectival vision as it developed in codes of representation in the fifteenth century, and it is understood in relation to Althusser's conception of the interpellative process of ideology.²²

While Heath's influential theorization of narrative space in classical cinema does not appear to have an immediate applicability to an analysis of early cinema, given its alternative regime of representation and cinematic address, the formulation, space takes place, aptly characterizes the construction of space in the films

discussed in this paper. Heath's argument is also pertinent in its broad implication that there is a relationship between representation and subjectivity, and that spatial practices in film involve the spectator in a process that reproduces social relations in society more generally.

These political concerns regarding the analysis of space in film are refocused in this discussion of early cinema in the direction of the work of Michel Foucault. Although this paper is not dealing with the issue of spectatorship *per se*, a consequence of such a shift is the assumption of a different notion of the subject from that generally used in contemporary film theory. Foucault, who is less interested in subjectivity understood as a process involving an underlying mechanism, whether ideology or desire, focuses on institutional practices and discourses, which are 'productive' or constitutive of the terms according to which it is possible for individuals to be subjects in particular historical periods. If this conception of the subject loses a sense of the complexity of psychic processes (and the unconscious investments of spectators in the imaginary of cinema), it gains in an understanding of the historicity of the formations within which individuals become subjects.²³

Space takes place in the films in this study in the sense that the location of everyday activities (space) becomes a locus of display (place). While this does not involve a textual inscription of the spectator's look through strategies of continuity editing, there is an invitation, even in single shot films, for spectators to look in a certain way. In *What Demoralized the Barber Shop* and *A Windy Day on the Roof*, for example, male characters who are so concerned with looking up women's skirts are giving an indication of how the women's actions are to be understood.²⁴ If these situations orient looking, they also represent space in terms of implicit rules of operating and social relations.

In Heath's argument space becomes meaningful as place when certain relations of looking are enacted. In his focus on the implications of *narrative* for classical film space, Heath also prioritizes a particular view of *space*, one in which vision is central. In order to further historicize the notion that space takes place in the films in this study, it will be useful, however, to displace this priority given to vision. Michel de Certeau in *The Practice of Everyday Life* develops an analysis of space that also uses the distinction between space and place.²⁵ If in Heath's formulation, space (in classical cinema) is meaningful in as much as it *becomes* place in the movement of narrative ('narrative clarity . . . hangs on the negation of space for place'),²⁶ in de Certeau's analysis space *and* place are distinct regimes of location. In other words de Certeau delineates a space different from that of perspectival vision

²³ Foucault in *The Archaeology of Knowledge and Discourse on Language* is critical of relying on a notion of psychological subjectivity (p. 55) in historiography as well as analysing phenomena in a meta-explanatory manner.

²⁴ Charles Musser discusses an 1897 Edison version of *What Demoralized the Barber Shop* which appears to be quite similar to the later version in Charles Musser *Before the Nickelodeon: Edwin S. Porter and the Edison Manufacturing Company* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 113–114.

²⁵ Michel de Certeau *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven F. Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984). This paper borrows part of its title from de Certeau's book.

²⁶ Heath *Questions of Cinema*, p. 39.

Escaping the imaginary totalizations produced by the eye, the

everyday has a certain strangeness . . . whose surface is only its upper limit, outlining itself against the visible. Within this ensemble, I shall try to locate the practices that are foreign to the 'geometrical' or 'geographical' space of visual, panoptic or theoretical constructions. These practices of space refer to a specific form of *operations* ('ways of operating'), to 'another spatiality' . . . ²⁷

²⁷ De Certeau *The Practice of Everyday Life* p. 93

In de Certeau's schema space, on the one hand, is a 'practiced place' capable of accommodating various uses and defined in relation to 'the operations that orient it, situate it, [and] temporalize it. . . .'²⁸ These operations actualize a location by concretely bringing it into existence. Space is also associated with tactics, which insinuate themselves into authorized constructions of place and can undermine them. Place, on the other hand, involves a sense of the stable structuring of a location through a conception of 'proper' rules and a univocal ordering of elements. Place is bound up with perspective and a panoptic vision. It is also linked to voyeurism. De Certeau describes someone standing on the top of the World Trade Centre, a person whose body is 'no longer clasped by the streets':

His elevation transfigures him into a voyeur. It puts him at a distance. . . . The exaltation of a scopic and gnostic drive: the fiction of knowledge is related to this lust to be a viewpoint and nothing more.

Must one finally fall back into the dark space where crowds move back and forth . . . ?²⁹

²⁹ *Ibid.* p. 92

De Certeau invokes what would seem to be a long-standing masculine anxiety in which the threat of the city ('the dark space') is identified with the figure of woman, an association that is problematized by Patrice Petro in her work on Weimar cinema.³⁰ In this description de Certeau also identifies place with a masculine vision (the distanced view of the voyeur), linking perspective to a sexually implicated looking (the 'lust to be a viewpoint and nothing more')

³⁰ De Certeau's formulation is reminiscent of ones used by Charles Baudelaire and Walter Benjamin to describe the threat of the city to the male *flâneur*. For a critical analysis see Patrice Petro *Joyless Streets: Women and Melodramatic Representation in Weimar Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

In some discussions of de Certeau's work there is a problematic tendency to construct a binary opposition between place and space in which place is associated with a deterministic and monolithic conception of use and space is understood to mean – somewhat axiomatically – differentiated uses and resistance.³¹ This is not the import of my argument. I am interested in reading the films against the background of both Heath's and de Certeau's distinctions in order to foreground the competing definitions of space in the films.

³¹ See John Fiske 'Popular forces and the culture of everyday life' *Southern Review* vol. 21 no. 3 (1988) pp. 288–306. Fiske seems to imply a necessarily resistant quality to uses of space.

My interest, more precisely, is in analysing these spaces in terms of a sexual division of activity. This is also a concern of Griselda Pollock, who, in her work on impressionist painters, contrasts 'pictorial space' in which 'objects are placed in a rational and

32 Griselda Pollock *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and Histories of Art* (London: Routledge 1989) p. 65

abstract relationship' (which resonates with the perspectival view of de Certeau's 'place' and Heath's narrative space as place) with 'experiential space', discussed in the work of women artists.³² Like de Certeau, Pollock points to a space other than that constituted in relation to vision, but she does so in a way that foregrounds the difference gender makes. The distinction I propose for the analysis of films in this study is one between a masculine place, defined in terms of voyeurism, and a feminine space, defined in relation to the performance of everyday activities, a space whose *modus operandi* is not primarily visual.

That space in early cinema representation admits of different kinds of analysis is illustrated in *A Windy Day on the Roof*. The film is a single shot narrative organized around a gag. It shows two simultaneous activities, a painter looking up a woman's skirt while painting the side of the building and a woman hanging laundry on a clothes-line on the roof. In the use of a painted backdrop of a cityscape and the choice of the clothes on the line (knickers and a camisole), the film further sexualizes the woman in the city. A comic tension, however, is produced as the spectator's attention is divided between the two activities. While the pressure of expectation regarding the imminent gag – what will the woman do when she discovers the painter looking? – gives a priority to the painter's activity, the fact that there are no cuts, inserts, or shifts of camera position to focus the spectator's attention, as one might expect in a classical Hollywood film, gives some autonomy to the woman's activity; it is not simply subsumed within the terms of the joke.³³

The film ends when the woman discovers the untoward glance of the painter and throws a bucket of water on his head, whereupon the painter exits from the bottom of the frame. This gag of discovery and retribution can be analysed in various ways: as a straightforward joke on the inappropriate prurience of the male voyeur; as a symbolic castration, and as a sophisticated formal joke that foregrounds the presence of the frame. It is also about a conflict over the legitimate use of space (looking or domestic labour) and who will have the authority to define this use (the painter or the housewife).

The gag, in other words plays out the conflict over characters' different relationships to space. On the one hand, there is an association between the man and vision in which the woman is a spectacle for the male voyeur's look. Space becomes a meaningful location as it is articulated in relation to characters' lines of sight (will the woman see the painter looking up her skirt?) On the other hand, there is an association between the woman and the everyday, where space is meaningful in relation to the particular activity enacted within it. The painter, like de Certeau's voyeuristic observer looking in on someone else's world, establishes the pre-eminence of sight in defining space, and his status as a man authorizes him to do

33 For Burch in *Life to Those Shadows* a visual flatness in early cinema includes horizontal placement of figures in the shot and a lateralizing effect on actor's movements. Before the woman discovers the painter in *A Windy Day* this kind of articulation of space has the effect of producing two areas of action.



A Windy Day on the Roof

34 De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (general introduction), p. xix.



A Windy Day on the Roof

so. The woman asserts her authority over space through her actions.

A Windy Day on the Roof illustrates a further sense in which space can be understood to take place. In the painter's look at the woman, the practice of everyday life (space) is subordinated to relations of looking (place). This is interesting in relation to de Certeau's conception of strategy, a *modus operandi* of place in which 'a subject of will and power . . . can be isolated from an "environment"'.³⁴ The effect of the attempt to sexualize the woman in *A Windy Day on the Roof* involves an isolation of the character from her environment: the woman is abstracted from the space of ordinary activities. In this abstraction – which is the inappropriateness of the scenario – de Certeau's 'other spatiality' (the space of everyday operations) is made invisible. The film ends with the woman alone in the shot and an assertion of the visibility of this other space – the space of everyday life.

Prostitution and the visibility of sexuality

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the public visibility of women, especially their increased presence in public spaces – workplaces, lodging and boarding houses, department stores, city streets, and urban amusements – received a great deal of contemporary commentary. There was a widespread concern, which was expressed in studies of middle-class reformers and in the popular press, over the dangers facing the single 'girl' alone, 'on the town' and 'adrift' in the city. This person's sexual behaviour was an underlying anxiety.

Consternation, however, is not the only response to this situation. Kathy Peiss details the emergence of a subculture of working women around the 'cheap amusements' of commercialized leisure from 1880–1920 in New York City. Within a working-class understanding of social codes and relationships, aspects of the increased visibility of women and especially the notion of 'putting on style', which included a concern for fashionable clothing and an assertive display in public places, was a strategy of self-definition.³⁵

With the proviso that implications of practices cannot be assumed from their discursive constructions, I analyse one aspect of the production of the visibility of women in reformers' reports on prostitution – the 'Social Evil' – during the early twentieth century. These reports produce a version of 'place' in the sense of an authorized conception of location in which women become the object of a scrutinizing gaze, and they contribute – as do the films in this study – to a historical field of discourses regarding working women's visibility in public places. If in *A Windy Day on the Roof* the housewife is sexualized irrespective of the fact that she is in the

35 Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), especially pp. 56–87. Peiss further discusses the significance of cinema going within the culture of working class women as well as the positive aspects of films representing everyday heterosexual encounters in the workplace and on the street. On the implications of women's increased public presence for cinema, also see Hansen, *Babel and Babylon*; Ben Singer, 'Female power in the serial-queen melodrama: the etiology of an anomaly', *Camera Obscura*, vol. 22 (1990), pp. 91–129; and Lauren Rabinowitz, 'Temptations of pleasure: nickelodeons, amusement parks, and the sights of female sexuality', *Camera Obscura*, vol. 23 (1990), pp. 71–89.

space of everyday life, in these vice reports, it is the sexual visibility of women in the everyday that is cause for scandal

Catherine Stansell, in her study of New York in the nineteenth century, argues that prostitution, already a feature of life in the city, is viewed as a social problem between 1830 and 1860 when it becomes more visible on public streets. An account from the period, quoted by Stansell, illustrates this point 'It [prostitution] no longer confines itself to secrecy and darkness, but boldly strikes through our most thronged and elegant thoroughfares'³⁶ *Commercialized Prostitution in New York City* (1913), written nearer to the period under investigation in this paper, charts the perception of the extent of prostitution's incursion into public places

There is another group of miscellaneous places – the natural channels through which the varied life of a great city passes. These are freely used by the prostitute. Attention is called to them simply to emphasize the fact that wherever groups of people meet for innocent pleasure or for business, there the prostitute lingers to ply her trade. Such places include subway and railway stations, hotel lobbies, entrances to department stores, ferry slips, and post office buildings.³⁷

It is not simply the visibility of prostitution *per se*, but a particular kind of visibility that is most problematic. Prostitutes 'linger' with people going about the routines of their everyday life, and they 'freely' use places in which ordinary life in the city is conducted

The anxiety over the easy access to vice facilitated by such a situation focuses on places where prostitutes and male 'runners' and 'lookouts' solicit clients as well as the devious methods of procuring new prostitutes. This involves:

Procurers [who] frequent entrances to factories and department stores, or walk the streets at night striking up acquaintance with girls who are alone and looking for adventure. They select a girl waiting on a table in a restaurant, or at the cashier's desk, and gradually make her acquaintance. They attend steamboat excursions, are found at the sea shore and amusement parks, in moving picture shows, at the public dance halls.³⁸

The Social Evil (1910) identifies additional places of danger, such as soda-water fountains and candy stores, employment agencies, penny-in-the-slot arcades, and delicatessen stores.³⁹

While reformers detail the existence of the business of prostitution in the spaces of everyday life, however, they also produce the visibility of prostitution, especially for the middle classes. Many reports include the findings of field investigators, which are frequently presented as case studies. One investigative procedure is described as follows:

A census was taken in 27 different tenements where immoral

³⁶ Christine Stansell, *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York 1789–1860* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986) p. 173. Stansell quotes William W. Sanger's *The History of Prostitution: Its Extent, Causes and Effects Throughout the World* (New York: The Medical Publishing Co., 1921) a major nineteenth century report on the subject.

³⁷ George J. Kneeland, *Commercialized Prostitution in New York City* (New York: The Century Co., 1913) p. 65.

³⁸ *Ibid.* p. 86.

³⁹ Committee of Fourteen, *The Social Evil in New York City: A Study of Law Enforcement by the Research Committee of the Committee of Fourteen* (New York: Andrew H. Kellogg Co., 1910) p. 65.

conditions were found to exist during the month of February, 1912. In the different apartments 56 women were found who, on the basis of dress, conversation, and general bearing, were classed as 'suspicious'. At times [the male investigator noted] children were playing in front of doors behind which prostitutes plied their trade.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Kneeland *Commercialized Prostitution* pp. 26-27

Part of the investigator's skill involves an ability to read codes of dress and behavior of the women in the tenements. This paradigmatic example of a Foucauldian scenario of nineteenth-century discipline involving surveillance and individualization is inflected in relation to gender. A frequent complaint by reformers was that the invisibility of the act of sex in the prostitution exchange produced a problem for law enforcement and prosecution.⁴¹ In the above report, the invisibility of the act (behind the closed doors in front of which children play) is displaced onto the visibility of 'suspicious' characteristics in certain women. Thus the investigator's job involves reading women's bodies for the implication of illicit sexuality.

⁴¹ See for example Committee of Fourteen *The Social Evil in New York City* p. xxiv

While the presence of prostitution in everyday life is a problem *per se* in these reports, it is more precisely a problem of the indeterminacy of the boundary between spaces of the everyday and sexual spaces. This involves a slippage between respectable (ordinary) locations and immoral ones in which vice occurs and between types of women, respectable and morally loose. If Kneeland expresses some incredulity over the fact that prostitutes do ordinary things ('The prostitute herself frequents the hairdressing and manicure parlor'), *The Social Evil* (1902) comments on the problem in a more straightforward manner: 'it would be a grievous error to suppose that all prostitutes, or even a very large proportion of them, are thus easily distinguished from the decent classes of society.'⁴²

⁴² Kneeland *Commercialized Prostitution* p. 68. Committee of Fifteen *The Social Evil: With Special Reference to Conditions Existing in the City of New York (A Report Prepared Under the Direction of the Committee of Fifteen)* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1902) p. 80. The fluid boundary between respectable employment and prostitution for women and the proximity of prostitution to the daily life of working class communities is discussed by Barbara Meil Hobson in *Uneasy Virtue: The Politics of Prostitution and the American Reform Tradition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990).

⁴³ AM and B *Picture Catalogue* (1902) p. 51

The films in this study can be analysed in relation to these issues. While the choice of location, for example, a corset shop or a manicure parlour, carries 'advantages' already noted, the films also rehearse the issue of a lack of proper segregation between ordinary and sexual public spaces. *In a Manicure Parlor* plays out this dilemma at the level of the *mise-en-scène*. It shows two couples, a female manicurist and male client, on either side of a screen in a manicure parlour. While the couple on the right are occupied in conversation as the manicurist works on the customer's nails, the couple on the left kiss and hug. The split screen effect in the film emphasizes the distinction between the two spaces that are represented. The man involved in the assignation reinforces its illicit nature by frequently looking around to ensure that he and the manicurist are not being detected. The 'well behaved' pair⁴³ interrupt their conversation in order to hear what is going on, and at



A Busy Day for the Corset Model



Four Beautiful Pairs



What Demoralized the Barber Shop

44 See E. J. Bellocq, *Storyville Portraits: Photographs from the New Orleans Red-Light District, Circa 1912* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1970) Plate 16. Shelley Stamp Lindsey discusses the representation of prostitution in film in 'Wages and sin: *Traffic in Souls* and the white slavery scare' unpublished paper delivered at the 11th Ohio University Film Conference, Athens, Ohio, November 1989.

45 Mary Gay Humphreys, 'Women bachelors in New York', *Scribner's Magazine*, vol. 20 (1896), p. 627. This is one of a series of articles by Humphreys on independent working women and bachelor girls in *Scribner's* during 1896. Thanks to Ben Singer's 'Female power in the serial-queen melodrama' for this reference.

one point the manicurist chastises her customer when it seems that he is becoming susceptible to the bad influence on the other side of the screen (he is not keeping his hand in a bowl of water). This further illustrates the influence of immoral spaces on respectable ones, even if it produces the pleasure of seeing that is illicit.

In *A Busy Day for the Corset Model* there is a distinction between the diegetic space as it exists for the characters, which involves a respectable woman who is shopping for corsets and models at work, and that space as it is orchestrated for viewers of the film. The corset models are framed by the entryway to the room and stand on a raised platform in the centre of the shot; as they turn on the platform they hesitate to face forward in the direction of the camera. In *Four Beautiful Pairs* the ordinary space of the department store becomes a sexualized space through a visual joke involving the juxtaposition of the upper bodies of female shop assistants, who are standing behind a display counter, with the legs of mannequins wearing stockings in the display counter in front of the assistants. This gives the impression that the saleswomen are not wearing skirts. Finally, in *What Demoralized the Barber Shop*, it is unclear whether the women who are soliciting attention through their bold swaying are prostitutes on the street or women coming onto men in the barber shop. While the implication of the title (a demoralization) and the loud striped stockings (clothing that draws attention to itself) would appear to suggest that the women are prostitutes, the joke in the film is on the indeterminacy of the women's status, encouraged by the fact that their faces are not visible, as well as the men's incredulity that such a spectacle could be intruding into their public and homosocial space.⁴⁴

Over and above the narrative heuristic involved in the choice of these locales, there is a wider social resonance to the dilemma of space enacted in the films, one in which the veneer of respectability is combined with the attraction of a prurient spectacle. In rehearsing the problem of the boundaries of space, the films point to the way the scandal of prostitution – its everyday visibility – could attach itself to women more generally. Indeed in discussions during the period, the public visibility of women could be reason enough for mistaking them as sexually available:

The exodus of women, for one reason or another, to the cities in the last ten years parallels that of men. . . . Each year they come younger and younger. They have ameliorated the customs and diversified the streets; nor are they to be confused with any of the better-known types.⁴⁵

In this commentary on women's increased presence on city streets from an article, 'Women bachelors in New York' (1896) in *Scribner's Magazine* by Mary Gay Humphreys, single women in the city living on their own and working are differentiated from

prostitutes, the 'better-known types'. The article is both a description of this new type of person, the bachelor girl, and a defence of her lifestyle. Humphreys walks a fine line between a number of possible criticisms of the single woman: she is not libertarian or feminist (that is, she is not a 'theorist'), she is uninterested in homosocial or potentially lesbian forms of leisure that might be found in women's clubs, and, most particularly, although the bachelor girl has set up a household without the benefit of marriage, she is not promiscuous. Humphreys defends this new living arrangement.

To be the mistress of a home, to extend hospitalities, briefly to be within the circumference of a social circle, instead of gliding with uneasy foot on the periphery, is the reasonable desire of every woman. When this is achieved [by the bachelor girl] many temptations, so freely recognized that nobody disputes them, are eliminated.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Humphreys, 'Women bachelors' in New York, p. 634.

The worry over 'the many temptations' facing the bachelor girl is mitigated by the fact that despite her unmarried state, she has a domestic impulse, and these new households avoid marginalizing her in a place 'on the periphery'. To be sure, the defensive tone in Humphreys' article speaks to the pressure on single women not to be seen to be sexually active (the bachelor girl does not live alone because she is interested in sex). This situation was a double bind for women since they were at the same time subject to the threat of sexual innuendo and harassment on public streets and places of work.

Sexual harassment and women's 'subculture'

[The boss] sauntered up to our table, began to fling jokes at us all in a manner of insolent familiarity, and asked the names of the new faces. When he came to me he lingered a moment and uttered some joking remarks of insulting flattery, and in a moment he had grasped my bare arm and given it a rude pinch, walking hurriedly away. I now found myself suddenly the cynosure of all eyes, the target of a thousand whispered comments, as I moved about the workroom. The physical agony of aching back and blistered feet was too great, though, for me to feel any mental distress over the fact – for the moment at least.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Dorothy Richardson, *The Long Day: The Story of a New York Working Girl*, in William L. O'Neill (ed.), *Women at Work* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1972), pp. 260–261 (Original publication date is 1905).

In this fictionalized version of an incident of harassment in *The Long Day: The Story of a New York Working Girl* (1905) by Dorothy Richardson, the female narrator becomes a focus of the scrutinizing attention of her workmates, making her complicit in the sexual advance of the boss. The woman's physical reality, however, involves the 'agony of an aching back and blistered feet', the visceral residuum of her labour. The narrator's relationship to her

work (in her experience of space, to use Pollock's formulation) asserts itself over her workmates' sexualizing gaze.

Discussions of sexual harassment in novels, serialized stories in magazines, and trade union journals during the period under investigation produced a network of advice for working-class and lower-middle-class women concerning how to negotiate life in the city. If the vice reports on prostitution and the films – in their orchestration of space through male voyeur's looks or prurient views for purported male spectators – rehearse a dynamic of place (in both de Certeau's and Heath's sense of place constituted in relation to vision), these discussions of sexual harassment foreground a conception of space, especially how women could negotiate being constructed as sexual within a masculine economy of place

Of course, being put 'in place' is not the only way of understanding the social issue of prostitution or voyeurism in the films, especially as either might have been understood by women. Prostitution, as Stansell argues, cannot be reduced to the views of moral reformers, who tend to characterize prostitutes as victims or moral degenerates; it is better understood as a choice – albeit a circumscribed one – for women. Female subcultures were also an aspect of prostitution, whether in brothels or in an understanding of the codes of heterosexual dating, which for some working-class women involved casual prostitution or 'charity' in which sex was exchanged for favours rather than money ⁴⁸

The focus on vice reports in this paper is a way of assessing one dominant construction of women as sexual in public places. In looking at the issue of sexual harassment, however, I draw on the work of feminist historians, who discuss women's experiences of prostitution, in order to underscore a notion of 'subculture'. The term is used in this context to imply ways of dealing with being located in a sexualized and 'voyeuristic' place (rather than the notion of a resistance to dominant interpellations). Various historical texts that rehearse the negotiation of power relations in contexts where women are inappropriately sexualized can be analysed to the end of reconstructing such a subculture

In 1908 *Harper's Bazar* [sic], for example, invited its readers, especially the 'average girl' between sixteen and thirty who has had 'the experience of coming to the city' over the past ten years to send in the story of her experience. Letters intended for the benefit of 'many thousands of girls who think of coming to the city within the next year or two', [sic] and who, 'adrift' are 'far more helpless and in peril than a man in the same straits' were published throughout the year.⁴⁹ While this exercise in readers' participation is concerned to impart certain moral standards, the letters both provide and give expression to a network of advice based on shared experience. One woman, after an offer of fifteen dollars a week from a doctor, describes the end of her job interview

⁴⁸ See Peiss *Cheap Amusements*. Also see Ruth Rosen *The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in America 1900–1918* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press 1982) for a discussion of the subculture of prostitution

⁴⁹ The girl who comes to the city a symposium *Harper's Bazar* [sic] vol. XLII no 1 (1908) p. 54 for a historical overview see Mary Bularzik 'Sexual harassment at the workplace: historical notes' in James Green (ed.) *Workers Struggles Past and Present: A Radical America Reader* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press 1983) pp. 117–135

As I was leaving his office, feeling that at last I was launched safely upon the road to a good living, he [the doctor] said, casually, 'I have an auto and as my wife doesn't care for that sort of thing, I shall expect you to accompany me frequently on pleasure trips' . . . After that experience I was ill for two weeks

50 The girl who comes to the city
a symposium *Harper's Bazar*
vol XLIII no 3 (1908)
p 278

Other writings point to the use of certain expressions coded for sexual innuendo. 'Sexual purity and the double standard' (1895) in *The Arena* notes

Already the introduction of the typewriter in the hands of lady operatives has started the low, familiar jesting that show the evil suspicions to which they are being subjected, as well as the temptations that surround them. In the city of Des Moines, where I live, there are many offices which employ stenographers where no self-respecting woman will long remain employed. I shall never forget the remark of a young friend of mine who has recently abandoned the profession of stenographer for that of nurse. In conversation with her about some trifling matter I made use of the expression, 'if you will be accommodating'.

'Oh!' said she, 'I do not want to hear you use that hateful expression.'

On seeking to know why she felt so, she informed me that she was almost invariably met with that remark when seeking employment, and had come to detest it.⁵¹

51 J Bellangee 'Sexual purity and the double standard' in *The Arena*
vol II no LXIII (1895)
pp 372-373

That a woman should be 'accommodating' was one way male employers expressed their sexual expectations of female employees, a phenomenon associated with increased job opportunities for women. There was also an assumption on the part of some employers that low wages for women were legitimate because they could be supplemented by women through part-time prostitution or participation in an economy of 'charity'. The comment of one employer, after being questioned about the offer of a low wage for a stenographer's job, is illustrative: 'He said he expected young women had friends who help them out.'⁵²

52 The girl who comes to the city
a symposium *Harper's Bazar*
vol XLIII no 3 p 277. Low wages and vice were argued to be causally related a situation that was deplored in reformist and trade union journals of the period. See *The World's Work and Life and Labor*

Serialized stories in popular magazines and novels can also be read as 'guides' on how a woman should conduct herself in public, especially in the event of some compromising situation. In 1910 *The Ladies' Home Journal* ran a serialized story, the 'true experiences' of a 'girl's long struggle' in New York City, a melodramatic and fictionalized version of some of the incidents reported in vice investigations. In a penultimate scene, the narrator/heroine is almost subjected to 'ruin' in a hotel room by a male friend. After escaping, she hails a cab and directs the driver to take her to the railway station.

Huddled in the hansom I suddenly remembered that my purse was

in my travelling bag in the hotel. However, in a chamois-bag, which I always carried when travelling pinned inside my shirtwaist, was money enough to pay the cab-fare and buy a ticket to New York.⁵³

⁵³ The Girl Herself: My experience in New York: the true story of a girl's long struggle in the big city as told by the girl herself. *The Ladies Home Journal*, vol. XXVII, no. 7 (1910), p. 59.

In the context of this tale of potential ruin there is an obliquely stated piece of advice to women travelling alone: carry a bag with money pinned inside your clothing.

The responses to incidents of sexual harassment in these texts are varied, and include indignation, anger, and political activism. Women's friendship is also seen as a form of solace and empowerment. In *The Long Day*, quoted earlier, the heroine leaves her job on the advice of the foreman: 'It's no place for a girl that wants to do right.' She subsequently roams the streets in an almost unconscious state, but is rescued by an old friend: 'and with Minnie Plympton's strong arm about my aching body, I was jolted away somewhere into a drowsy happiness'. This meeting follows an earlier discussion of the importance of women's friendship in the factory, 'the highest type of friendship'.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Richardson, *The Long Day*, pp. 262, 265, 198; both Richardson and Elizabeth Hasanovitz turn to trade unionism as one solution. See Elizabeth Hasanovitz, *One of Them: Chapters From a Passionate Autobiography* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1918). In practice women also confronted sexism in unions. See Bularzik, 'Sexual harassment at the workplace'.

It is useful to place a film such as *The Broker's Athletic Typewriter* alongside such texts. A key attraction of the film involves a transformation of the real boss to a dummy made to look like him, a cinematic trick (probably through stop motion substitution) that enables the female secretary to throw the boss around the room following his unwanted sexual advance. From the point of view of a working women's subculture in which the issue of sexual harassment was not hidden, the thematic material of such a film as well as the autonomy exhibited by the secretary (who responds positively to an earlier advance from a more suitable male worker) would have, one can speculate, included the pleasure of revenge. In *Four Beautiful Pairs* the female shop assistants form a community, commenting to each other and laughing at a naive male customer who mistakes appearance (of the mannequins' legs) for reality (the bodies of the assistants).

Thomas Elsaesser, in categorizing work on this period of cinema, describes one approach in which early cinema is understood as 'part of a "cultural" or ideological-theoretical history'. In his discussion of the importance of the specificity of regimes of space in early cinema, Elsaesser also notes that 'the impression of intelligibility of an action' in a film depends on 'whether the system that governs its representation is intelligible to the viewer'.⁵⁵ In this paper I use the notion of intelligibility in a broad sense. Certainly the scenarios of exposure in the films, especially in the comedies, are transparent in their project of displaying women's bodies. By avoiding the assumption of an inevitable (and ahistorical) voyeurism in the representation of women, the implausibility of the films can be foregrounded.

⁵⁵ Elsaesser and Barker, *Early Cinema*, pp. 5, 12.

This implausibility makes more sense in the relationship between the films, vice reports, and stories about sexual harassment. These texts can be seen to form a series with consonances on certain issues – working women's presence in public places, the everyday and sexuality, and the problem of permeable boundaries between ordinary and sexual spaces. Analysing such a series, a discursive field, is a way of assessing the terms according to which phenomena are visible and knowable in any historical period. One could also analyse films that explicitly thematize prostitution and sexual harassment, situating film in its historical context. The concern of this paper is, instead, to make explicit some of the historical terms according to which the films are comprehensible. How a film is understood, moreover, will depend on how its representation of space resonates with other experiences of space by viewers, who are differentiated in various ways.

Getting Strong



Towards the end of *Getting Strong*, the film in which three women exercise in a bedroom, one woman jokingly hits another and gestures with her arm as if to show her strength; the group begins to laugh; and the film closes when all three look directly at the camera. The effect, much as Hansen argues in relation to *What Happened on Twenty-Third Street, New York City*, is to produce a distance between the characters and their sexual display. In the case of *Getting Strong* this distance involves a humorous comment on the idea of 'getting strong' and the characters' pleasure in each other's company. It also foregrounds the performative space occupied by the actresses. As the spectacle of objectification breaks down, the female characters' actions produce another scenario of the everyday, one that digresses from the film's intent to expose women's bodies. Analysing these other spaces – in which women characters perform everyday activities and actresses perform their roles – is another way of understanding the attraction of women in the cinema of attractions.

I would like to thank Patrice Petro, Pat Mellencamp, Meaghan Morris, Bernie Gendron, and Herbert Blau for intellectual influences informing this paper, and especially Patrice, for her help with earlier drafts. I would also like to gratefully acknowledge the American Council of Learned Societies for their financial assistance in the form of a Henry Luce Foundation/ACLS Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship in American Art, 1992–1993. Thanks to Lewis Shultz, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee for his work on the frame enlargements.

Metaphors of space: polarization, dualism and Third World cinema

FELIX THOMPSON

In *Camp de Thiaroye/Camp Thiaroye* (Sembene Ousmane and Thierno Faty Sow, Senegal, 1988) the narrative, which leads up to the massacre of the African soldiers returning from the war in Europe in 1944, is for the most part staged within the perimeter wire of a newly built barracks. The film explores both the way in which the imposed antagonistic division represented by the camp boundaries may be exceeded, and the way in which colonial domination is reasserted. Through the figure of the initially Francophile Sergeant-Major Diatta, links between European culture, traditional cultures and African-American culture are developed. In each case these links are presented as narrative antitheses which are shown to be capable of resolution or to be part of a process of continuing development. For instance when Diatta says he cannot marry his cousin because he is a Catholic already married to a Frenchwoman, his uncle points out that in his home village there are Catholics with several wives. The conflict with the black American military policeman is resolved through a reconciliation in which Diatta is shown as conversant with African-American culture. At the same time Diatta's faith in French culture becomes progressively weakened as the oppressive policies of the colonial authorities become increasingly exposed. The imposed community of the military camp is a barrier to the sense of possibilities which lie beyond the European perimeter wire. The narrative is balanced between the promise of African diversity and the antagonistic divisions exported from Europe. The film reiterates in this balance a persistent question raised by Third World cinema about the place of

antagonisms arising from the exercise of imperial power or stemming from the relationships between developed and underdeveloped worlds. What role should be played by such antagonisms – both within the metaphoric possibilities of the films and the wider practices of Third World cinema?

This issue was addressed in part of a resolution of the Third World Filmmakers Meeting in Algiers, 1973

The different forms of exploitation and systematic plundering of the natural resources have had grave consequences on the economic and cultural levels for the so called 'underdeveloped' countries, resulting in the fact that even though these countries are undergoing extremely diversified degrees of development, they face in their struggle for independence a common enemy: imperialism which stands in their way as the principal obstacle to their development ¹

The difficulties in discussing the Third World and its practices are inherent in the unequal terms of the relation between on the one hand the 'common enemy' of imperialism and on the other Third World countries which 'are undergoing extremely diversified degrees of development' To speak of appropriate forms of struggle for either cultural or economic objectives requires that account be taken of the diversity, both economic and cultural, of the (diffuse) geographical area designated by the single term 'Third World' Ian Roxborough notes of the work of André Gunder Frank that he uses 'the single metaphor of a series of metropolis-satellite links from the Bolivian peasant in an unbroken chain to the rich New York Capitalist'.² Roxborough argues against these spatial metaphors of dependency that 'the notion of dependency defines a paradigm rather than a specific theory'.³ The employment of the extended spatial metaphor leads to one of the most widespread criticisms of Frank and his followers – that he uses a 'formal definition of dependency, which because of its formal nature is both static and unhistorical'.⁴ In the same way it may be argued that giving an account of Third World cultural practices in terms of simple inversions and oppositions grouped around a spatial/geographical divide which is taken as given tends to generate formalist assumptions which conceal the processes of the social and political context

The spatial metaphor itself, if used as one of the defining characteristics of Third World cinema, can have the unfortunate effect of reinstating the very oppressive relationships which it is intended to challenge. This tendency can be seen in the work of Julianne Burton, who persistently uses terms such as 'margin' and 'periphery' She argues, for instance, that there is a need to recognize the marginality of Third World films 'outside their own national context, whatever their status within it' ⁵ But to argue for

¹ Teshome Gabriel *Third Cinema in the Third World: The Aesthetics of Liberation* (Ann Arbor MI: UMI Research Press 1982) p 104

² Ian Roxborough *Theories of Underdevelopment* (London: Macmillan 1979) p 45

³ Roxborough *Theories of Underdevelopment* p 43

⁴ Gabriel Palma *Underdevelopments and Marxism: from Marx to the Theories of Imperialism and Dependency* (London: Thames Papers in Political Economy 1978) p 28

⁵ Julianne Burton 'Marginal cinemas and mainstream critical theory' *Screen* vol 26 nos 3–4 (1985) p 5

the 'mediating agency' of 'film critic, historian or other certified "expert" with media access' in the First World, is to imply that this agent will be at the centre of things not just in the First World but *between* Third World countries. The First World film critic is pictured as developing a critical theory which must face 'the challenge of testing its claims to generality if not universality of application against instances of historical and cultural specificity'.⁶ Burton's argument does not conceive that there should be any abandonment of a universal approach. As Gabriel observes, Burton's work 'proposes a most troubling example of critical theory along the lines of Wallerstein's core and periphery. There is a perfect fit here between Wallerstein's "World System Theory" and Burton's "Cinema-as-Spectacle"' against which Third World film must be compared.⁷ Kobena Mercer points to the problem of a quasi-imperial division of labour where 'the Third World produces films, the First World produces the criticism and theory to "make sense" of them'.⁸ Both Gabriel and Mercer point to the need for the First World critic to pay attention to the social and political processes which contribute to the ideological role of First World theory⁹, and there have been significant attempts locally to reconsider the practice of the cinema as not simply an industrial investment of the developed world when adopted in the Third World. For Alea, for example, the historical accumulation of contradictory practices of the cinema form 'one body of accumulated experience' available for use within his Third World context. Here the approach is the recentring of the historical legacy of the cinema within the context of and according to the needs of the Third World itself.¹⁰

The direct use of spatial metaphor in theoretical discussion as one of the defining characteristics of Third World cinema is not its only function. Spatial metaphor also provides the basis on which sets of antinomies are proposed. Examples of these include Julianne Burton's comparison of the different approach to film production, diffusion and reception of Third World film practice as compared with First World practice¹¹; and Gabriel's Tables comparing Folk and Print Art and western and non-western film conventions.¹² In each case the geographical boundaries are expected to mark distinct sets of cultural boundaries even if there is no suggestion of some kind of absolute dividing line.

An example of a sharp differentiation between the cultural boundaries of First and Third worlds can be found in *La hora de los hornos/Hour of the Furnaces* (Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, Argentina, 1968). In this film there is a strong emphasis on an equivalence between cultural, political and economic dependency. As the film states: 'What characterises Latin American countries is, first of all, their dependence – economic dependence, political dependence and cultural dependence.' Throughout the film,

6 *Ibid.* p. 6

7 Teshome Gabriel 'Colonialism and Law and Order criticism' *Screen* vol. 27 nos. 3–4 (1986) p. 140

8 Kobena Mercer 'Third Cinema at Edinburgh: reflections on a pioneering event' *Screen* vol. 27 no. 6 (1986) p. 97

9 Mercer in terms of race and Gabriel who argues that semiotics is ideologically implicated Mercer *ibid.* p. 97
Gabriel 'Colonialism and Law and Order criticism' p. 140

10 Thomas Gutierrez Alea 'The viewer's dialectic' in Coco Fusco (ed.) *Reviewing Histories: selections from new Latin American Cinema* (Buffalo: Hallwalls 1987) p. 191

11 Burton 'Marginal cinemas and mainstream critical theory' p. 12

12 Teshome Gabriel 'Third Cinema as guardian of popular memory towards a Third Aesthetics' in Jim Pines and Paul Willemen (eds) *Questions of Third Cinema* (London: BFI 1989) p. 42 and p. 46

culture is represented as being completely determined by the economic and political Robert Stam comments that Argentina is revealed in the film as 'a palimpsest of European influences' ¹³

¹³ Robert Stam 'The hour of the furnaces and the two avant gardes' in Coco Fusco (ed.) *Reviewing Histories* p 91

American and European mass communications are stated by the film to be in the direct service of neocolonialism: 'Mass communications replace conventional weapons. For neo-colonialism mass communications are more effective than napalm.' The one major representation of traditional culture shows a religious procession which is followed by scenes of fortune telling, card tricks and folk-healing using a toad. These manifestations of popular tradition are reduced by the commentary to the status of ideological illusion:

Priests, fortune tellers, faith healers, counsellors, astrologers, and teachers of morality Between the system and the people is a whole network sowing confusion Neo-colonial violence also takes more sublimated forms . . .

. . . (the pictures show a toad laid on a boy to heal him.) . . . God . . . fate . . . destiny . . . immortality . . . All this is held responsible for a situation created by the ruling class

The moment of complete domination by the colonial or neocolonial culture which preoccupies *Hour of the Furnaces* has been theorized by Fanon as but one part of the process in the shift of perceptions of culture that occurs during the struggle for liberation.¹⁴ Fanon devoted much energy to documenting the psychological effects of cultural domination and the mental problems it generated Cultural domination is described by Fanon as having real effects However, it is not seen by Fanon as a formal or automatically given result of economic and political domination as *Hour of The Furnaces* seems to imply. The anger of *Hour of the Furnaces* is close to Fanon's 'third fighting phase' where an attempt is made to awaken the people to struggle against domination ¹⁵ But the filmmakers do not seem to have progressed through Fanon's second phase of 'the return to source'¹⁶, of a return to the traditional culture(s) which might eventually be appropriated for political and economic struggle

What can the 'return to source' offer? In the first place it can offer a challenge to the suggestion that all Third World film practice has to surrender to the master discourse of western theory The film maker Jorge Sanjines, for instance, has attempted to develop a cinema engaged in political struggle based on 'communication through active participation'¹⁷ of the people most directly involved in the struggle, including peasants and miners in various Latin American countries By working within the languages and forms of thought of the peoples of Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador and Columbia, Sanjines has built his films around the social and political theories that they themselves developed For instance he found when filming in Ecuador that there was already a debate among the peasants

¹⁴ F Fanon *The Wretched of the Earth* (London: Penguin 1967), pp 178-183

¹⁵ *Ibid* p 179

¹⁶ Gabriel *Third Cinema in the Third World* p 7

¹⁷ Jorge Sanjines *Revolutionary cinema: the Bolivian experience* in Julianne Burton (ed.) *Cinema and Social Change in Latin America: conversations with filmmakers* (Austin: University of Texas Press 1986) p 45

¹⁸ Jorge Sanjines 'Language and popular culture', in Coco Fusco (ed.) *Reviewing Histories* p 160

¹⁹ *Ibid* p 158

²⁰ Manthia Diawara, 'African cinema today' *Framework*, no 37 (1989) p 124

²¹ Clyde Taylor 'Eurocentric vs new thought at Edinburgh' *Framework*, no 34 (1987) p 147

²² Fanon *The Wretched of the Earth* p 178

²³ *Ibid* p 180

²⁴ Manthia Diawara 'African cinema today' p 124

²⁵ *Ibid* p 126

between the supporters of 'Indianism' and supporters of a materialist analysis based on class.¹⁸ He explains that in his approach to narrative form he is prepared to introduce a narrator to break up the flow of the narrative to give the audience greater possibility for reflection. This he links to Quechua-Aymara oral tradition where narrators would attempt 'to anticipate history so that they could analyse it during the narration'.¹⁹ Awareness of the role of oral narration as a source appears to be present in the sequence at the beginning of *El coraje del pueblo/Courage of the People* (Jorge Sanjines, Bolivia, 1971) where a symbolic massacre on an open plain is represented in an almost diagrammatic way. The peasants, as they are shot, seem to be deliberately falling down. For the viewer this helps to create awareness that the narrative is at work *to demonstrate how* it happened. Claims for the use of traditional theories have also been made about African film making. For instance Manthia Diawara argues that in *Yeelen* (Souleymane Cisse, Mali, 1987) the narrative of the voyage of initiation which will enable social transformation is based on Bambara dialectics and Bambara conceptions of narrative time: 'In the film, the Komo leaders have the power to freeze time, to make the origin and the end coincide.'²⁰ It is clear that against any attempt at a monolithic theory of film there are plenty of examples of what Clyde Taylor describes as a receptivity to non-western processes of concept formation.²¹

However certain dangers do exist in this 'return to source'. Some of the dangers are described by Fanon. He describes how the native intellectual turning back from the colonial culture can become engaged in a 'banal search for exoticism'.²² The customs which are drawn on are often 'mummified fragments which because they are static are in fact symbols of negation and outworn contrivances'.²³ An example of this weakness is pointed to by Manthia Diawara in his discussion of *Yaaba* (Idrissa Ouedraogo, Burkina Faso, 1989). The film portrays a village life from which colonial and postcolonial issues are entirely absent. It is not uncritical of traditional life, showing how easy it is for charlatans to lay claim to tradition and demonstrating the intolerance which has turned Sana into a 'witch' and outcast. However, if we consider audiences for such films they are unlikely to be close to such village life. Those living in cities or in the developed world are more likely to react to the photography of the film as presenting the spectator with 'an idyllic image of an Africa which is devoid of every material contingency'.²⁴ From this point of view, as Diawara argues, the film is entirely devoted to humanizing Sana without trying to explore 'related issues of sexism, women's liberation and other social conflicts'.²⁵ By contrast, in *Muna Moto* (Jean-Pierre Dikongue-Pipa, Cameroon, 1976) traditional kinship relationships are shown to be unravelling in the wake of colonial influence so that the patriarchal and economic basis

for the payment of bride price becomes increasingly exposed

Sembene Ousmane seeks neither to recover lost harmony from tradition nor to document its disintegration. In *Emutai* (Sembene Ousmane, Senegal, 1971), which is based on the true story of a massacre of some Diola people by the French during World War II, he shows 'that the gods could no longer respond to the people's needs'. But at the same time traditional beliefs represented in *Emutai* could be a source of strength in present struggles: 'The important thing was to show a culture which people are unaware of, at a moment in our present day struggle. Now people know Emitai (god of thunder), the village of Effok where it happened, and that is part of our national heritage.'²⁶ In this way traditional figures are connected with the recovery of a continuing history of struggle during colonial occupation. However the incorporation of tradition in the narrative of anticolonial struggle can still be misinterpreted as the source of essential goodness. In Teshome Gabriel's account of *Ceddo* (Sembene Ousmane, Senegal, 1978) he suggests that silence distinguishes both the princess Dior and her Ceddo captor. He interprets this to mean first that 'tradition is instinctual and articulation is not necessary for active opposition to the Muslim religion, now symbolic of foreign religions.' Secondly he suggests that the silence means reverence for traditional culture which remains true to its African identity.²⁷ Clearly this is at odds with Sembene's own attitude to tradition outlined above and the conclusion that tradition should be instinctive and inarticulate coincides uncomfortably with colonial preconceptions of African cultures.²⁸ Th. Mpoyi-Buatu identifies a more critical view of tradition in *Ceddo*. He points out that in the public political debates carried through the mediation of Jaroo, presumably an attempted construction of a typical court debate, we are far from an idyllic vision of 'a world where lies are not told'.²⁹ What we have, in fact, is debate at more than one level. For the *men* of the Ceddo are also shown in contrasting discussion about how to react to the growing power of the Imam. This debate is shown as a traditional activity where each participant puts a straw in the pot to indicate participation. In this scene and similar ones in *Emutai* and *Camp Thiaroye* Sembene demonstrates a tradition of popular debate and democracy which, although it is shown to be subject to economic and social forces, remains as a model to be drawn on in the present. This availability of tradition is also pointed to by Mpoyi-Buatu in the use of proverbs in *Ceddo*. He notes that 'as a lived experience, the proverb circulates in the capacity of common knowledge'. However the proverbs to begin with are part of an empty court ritual performed in front of the Ceddo. It is only when Majoor has cut himself off from the ruling brotherhood by renouncing Islam, Mpoyi-Buatu argues, that the proverbs become meaningful for the Ceddo.³⁰ So the proverbs themselves have to be used in the right

²⁶ Noureddine Ghali. An interview with Sembene Ousmane in John Downing (ed.) *Film and Politics in the Third World* (New York: Autonomedia 1987) p. 49

²⁷ Teshome Gabriel. *Third Cinema in the Third World* p. 89

²⁸ As Pfaff points out, the princess is acutely aware of her superior status in relation to her Ceddo captor and uses the griot as an intermediary to talk to him. Her sense of status clearly restricts her use of speech. Francoise Pfaff. *The Cinema of Ousmane Sembene - A Pioneer of African film* (Westwood, Connecticut: Greenwood Press 1984) p. 170

²⁹ Th. Mpoyi-Buatu. *Sembene Ousmane's Ceddo and Med Hondo's West Indies* in Downing (ed.) *Film and Politics in the Third World* p. 61

³⁰ Ibid. p. 62

way and the right circumstances to be a useful reservoir of shared knowledge. As Mpoyi-Buatu concludes, *Ceddo* conducts a critical remembrance of African history which is shown in terms of social process and conflict. 'The social dimension of the former societies which it restores should constitute the basis for future access to our own modernity.'³¹

³¹ Ibid. p. 63

A further area in which tradition is said to influence Third World films is that there is less emphasis on individualism and that psychology and psychoanalysis are not relevant. This also happens to coincide with expectations in postrevolutionary Third World countries that socialism will displace bourgeois individualism. One example of the dismissal of individualistic psychology is put forward by Teshome Gabriel in his contrast of the use of the closeup in non-western and western cinemas.

Western Distance varies according to the emotional content of the scene. Emotion, e.g. anger, is portrayed in close-up.

Non-Western: There is minimal use of the convention of close-up shots. This is perhaps due to lack of emphasis on psychological realism.³²

³² Gabriel, *Third Cinema as guardian of popular memory*, p. 46.

³³ Gabriel, *Third Cinema in the Third World*, p. 3.

Gabriel sees this as part of a developing pattern in Third Cinema which identifies 'the masses as true hero' in the struggle for liberation.³³ Alternatively he argues that the topic of Third Cinema practice is not psychological or mythic but ideological or social (ideological in terms of ideological struggle). He engages in an extended comparison of Bunuel's *Los Olvidados* (Mexico, 1950) and Littin's *El Chacal de Nahueltoro/The Jackal of Nahueltoro* (Chile, 1969). He argues persuasively that the 'theme of the "absent father" and the lack of a stable family unity dominates *Los Olvidados*'. This provides the setting for the unresolved Oedipus complex that permeates the film as Pedro searches for an ideal father.³⁴ By contrast it is the social discourses of poverty, class and the Chilean penal system that surround the murderer in *The Jackal of Nahueltoro*. We are not given an explanation in terms of Jorge's family life.³⁵

³⁴ Ibid. p. 52.

³⁵ Ibid. pp. 53-54.

A major problem with Gabriel's approach is the vast oversimplification of western film practice implied by the equation of the closeup with emotion. Apart from anything else, narrative structure, mise-en-scene and point-of-view shots also play an important part in representing emotion, and, overall, there does seem to be a weakness in Gabriel's work in its attribution of fixed meanings to the formal attributes of film style.³⁶ However, beyond this there are much wider questions about the construction of our ideas of psychological realism and psychoanalysis which I think need to be addressed.

³⁶ Mercer, *Third Cinema at Edinburgh*, p. 97.

Fredric Jameson has argued in relation to Balzac that in the early

period of bourgeois dominance in which Balzac was writing the laws of the new society were not seen as fixed 'Alternative histories' could be imagined and expressed in a variety of narrative modalities. However, by the second half of the nineteenth century, in the period of what he calls 'high realism', choice in narrative disappears and 'a kind of obligatory "indicative" register' comes in.³⁷ If this is applied to psychological realism in films then we can see that there might be a contrast between assumptions made about psychology in the West, which has not recently been faced with social upheaval or imposed cultural norms, and the Third World where there is a continuing struggle for economic, political and cultural liberation. The setting of character within the mise-en-scene, the movement between fuller shots and closeup and point-of-view shots is anchored in western films by shared assumptions about the boundaries between the inner psychological domain and the public or social domain. The possibilities of 'alternative histories' arise for the main characters in such films as *The Jackal of Nahueltoro* or *Memorias del subdesarrollo/Memories of Underdevelopment* (Tomas Alea, Cuba, 1968) or *Xala* (Sembene Ousmane, Senegal, 1974) because these characters do not have a fixed sense of identity. This can be explained, in turn, because they do not have a stable position within the conflicts of their particular societies. In other words, Third World filmmakers cannot take it for granted that their audiences share ready assumptions about predictable psychological processes; in Third World films the boundary line between the psychological and the sociological is open to question.³⁸ As Gerry Turvey argues of *Xala*, it becomes possible 'to return the personal and social to each other in a new synthesis'.³⁹ Contrary to Gabriel, then, I wish to suggest that the dimension of the psychological is still very relevant. As Fanon puts it: 'Because it is a systematic negation of the other person and a furious determination to deny the other person all the attributes of humanity, colonialism forces the people it dominates to ask themselves the question constantly "In reality, who am I?"' It is for this reason that Fanon saw colonialism as a 'fertile purveyor for psychiatric hospitals'.⁴⁰

If we take the example of *The Jackal of Nahueltoro*, the film examines the case of Jorge/José as one in which his identity has not been fixed by any of the ideological apparatuses which would normally be expected to position the individual within Chilean society (as is indicated by the uncertainty about his name). This is related in the film to the extreme poverty of Jorge/José's early childhood and the marginal existence afforded by his succession of casual jobs. When Jorge/José murders Rosa and her children the precipitating causes are drink and her accusations that he was responsible for her eviction from her home. In fact, it is clear that the reason for this eviction was the death of her husband and the requirement of the landowner that she must leave the tied

³⁷ Fredric Jameson *The Political Unconscious* (London: Methuen, 1981) p. 193

³⁸ This is not to deny that in some cases, such as *Courage of the People*, collective issues predominate and individual psychology is therefore absent.

³⁹ Gerry Turvey *Xala and the curse of neo realism* *Screen* vol. 26 nos. 3-4 (1985) p. 83

⁴⁰ F. Fanon *The Wretched of the Earth* p. 200

accommodation Rosa's false accusations and Jorge/Jose's reaction to them demonstrate that the narrative is partly operating at the level of individual perceptions of events. The murders are shown as flashbacks in the context of Jorge/Jose's testimony before the press and court officials who have brought him back to the scene of the crime on open scrubland. The murders are 'remembered' with unsteady handheld camera mostly taking Jorge/Jose's point of view – the unsteadiness partly corresponding to his state of drunkenness. By the end of his testimony the listening crowd has become so incensed that its disorder generates its own disruption of camera equilibrium. There seems a parallel here between the disorder of the social process and the disorder of Jose/Jorge's mental state. As he becomes subjected in prison to the discourses of Catholicism and Chilean Nationalism the camera reaches an equilibrium which is once again shattered during the outcry of journalists following his execution. Gabriel describes the 'moving perspective' of the hand held camera in Latin American cinema as being for the purposes of 'experiential involvement and dramatic identification' and not a response to individual psychology.⁴¹ But what is this experiential and dramatic identification for if not to explore the impact of contradictory circumstances of economic marginalization on one individual, and to suggest a response to the way social circumstances constitute individual psychology? Instead of Jorge/Jose's psychology being presented as an inner force driving his actions it is shown as a product of an interaction between the inner and outer worlds.

This questioning of the relationship of inner and outer worlds often takes a more symbolic than sociological form in Third World film. There is a sense in which films such as *Heritage Africa* (Kwaw Ansah, Ghana, 1989), *Touki-Bouki* (Djibril Diop Mambety, Senegal, 1973) and *Xala* are explorations of individual psychology in terms of the symbols of contesting cultures. They constitute a rehearsal of the contest for the spectator's identification with cultural symbols. As Manthia Diawara argues of *Heritage Africa*, the film puts into play the psychological history of encounters between Africa and Europe. In the scene in which Kwesi forces his 'too-African' mother to wait outside until his friends leave, the 'spectator knows that Kwesi is ashamed of his mother and wants to make her pass for one of the servants'.⁴² The revenge taken by the people on Kwesi at the end of the film leads Diawara to suggest that Ansah 'is interested in the history of the repressed identity and the ways in which the repressed identity returns with a vengeance'.⁴³ The positioning of characters in relation to their repression of cultural identity also spills over into questions of audience identification. Clearly figures such as Kwesi and El Hadj in *Xala* are targets of satire. However the ferocious purgation of El Hadj at the end of *Xala* indicates the degree of tension that might be present in some

⁴¹ Gabriel, *Third Cinema as guardian of popular memory* p. 46

⁴² Diawara, *African cinema today* p. 122

⁴³ *Ibid.* p. 122

⁴⁴ Kwaw Ansah suggested at the London Film Festival in 1989 that along with many other Africans he shared some of the characteristics of Kwesi

audiences when confronting their relationship to the neocolonial culture ⁴⁴

In films like *Touki-Bouki* and *Memories of Underdevelopment* what is at issue is not only the relation of the characters to the contesting cultures, but also the position of the audience as spectators. If the exploration of psychic processes is carried this one step further, to what extent does psychoanalysis become relevant? Gabriel's dismissal of psychoanalysis does make it difficult to give a full account of the contest for meaning and identity which is inscribed in both *Memories of Underdevelopment* and *Touki-Bouki*. In *Memories of Underdevelopment* the character of Sergio as a marginal figure in the Cuban revolution is reinforced by his alignment with a spectator subjectivity and scopophilia which have been widely observed in western deployment of the cinematic apparatus. The spectator's subjectivity develops through Sergio's project of making intellectual observations of the Cuban revolution and underdevelopment. The project rapidly slides into trying to make sense of the 'underdevelopment' of Cuban women. This is graphically demonstrated near the beginning when, in voice over, Sergio informs the viewer that now he has escaped his nagging wife he will find out if he has anything to say about the state of affairs around him. The camera passes over his collection of art objects and comes to rest on the outline of a woman's body. Much of the rest of the narrative invokes this familiar trajectory by exploring Cuban women as simultaneous attraction for Sergio's voyeurism and anxiety in the threat of the loss of power and desire. But the implication of the viewer in this scopophilic regime is disturbed by the irruption of another vision which disturbs the 'look through the key hole', as it were. This different vision is located at the centre of Sergio's consciousness as snatches of revolutionary and anti-imperialist documentary are shown to enter his inner thoughts. The spectator's subjectivity can thus be said to be split between a scopophilic use of the cinematic apparatus and an alternative disrupting vision, and psychoanalysis helps clarify the contested cinematic subjectivity which is at the centre of the struggle over cultural and political identity in the film.

On the other hand, psychoanalysis is not sufficient if we wish to account for the effect of political and social context on the way spectators will resolve this struggle. The reaction in Cuba to the implication of the spectator in the regime of scopophilia of *Memories of Underdevelopment* may be quite different from that in the USA and Britain, where Sergio was taken by many critics to be an intellectual experiencing the alienation of Communist society. Chanan describes how the political discourse of anti-imperialism within Cuba, even in the fragmentary form that it takes here, provided a necessary distance from Sergio's consciousness and the related regime of spectator subjectivity.⁴⁵ In the absence of such

⁴⁵ Michael Chanan *The Cuban Image* (London: BFI, 1985) pp. 245–246

political discourse, as Alea himself noted, audiences in the United States searched with great persistence for an optimistic outcome for Sergio.⁴⁶

If *Memories of Underdevelopment* provides an example of western versions of cinematic subjectivity as part of the process of cultural contestation, in *Touki-Bouki* the viewer as subject is at the centre of the contest. The film may be seen as positioning the spectator between two powerful 'others'. The manifest 'other' is of course Europe. Europe provides an origin for the lifestyle of Mory and Anta – a hedonism with access to consumer goods. But a second 'other' is present in the constant reference to an Oedipal scenario within traditional culture. This is replayed through the relationship between the small boy leading a herd of cattle, Mory's bike, which is 'animalized' with cow horns, and the repeated scenes of animal slaughter. These scenes of slaughter occur both in traditional settings and in the westernized slaughterhouse. There is, then, a traditional 'other' which is a possible focus of both desire and the fear of castration. The existence of these two 'Others' leads to a degree of hybridity around the figure of Mory. The hybridity of the bike is matched by a kind of splitting of Mory's hedonistic asocial position in the appearance of a 'wild man' of uncertain race. This 'wild man' is found first of all sitting in a tree with a stone age axe. He takes over Mory's bike as Mory and Anta go in search of money for the boat to Europe. *Touki-Bouki* maintains an ambiguous approach towards the asocial pleasure seeking of Mory and Anta. It depends on the viewer whether the escape to Europe is seen as a satisfactory outcome. The fantasy of Mory and Anta's fêted return with the trappings of European wealth is balanced against Mory's retreat from the ship that would take him to Europe (or from Africa). For *Touki-Bouki* perhaps the crucial moment of interpretation is the accident to the 'wild man' who takes over Mory's bike. The sequence that leads up to this has Mory turning back from the ship and running towards town. This is intercut with the 'wild man' veering round the modern quarter of the city. Subjective shots from the bike show the office blocks slewing round in the vision. In a third visual element of the sequence cattle are shown being slaughtered, their head movements matching the movements of the subjective viewpoint of the city office blocks from the bike. We are, in fact, seeing the Europeanized city from the point of view of a cow being slaughtered. On the one hand, the accident to the 'wild man' could be seen to be demonstrating the impossibility of escaping the castrating force of tradition. On the other hand, the sequence might be seen as showing the impossibility of the European world for Mory, especially with the baggage of animality which he would be expected to carry. The hybridity of Mory's position as carried by the figure of the 'wild man' is shown to be subject to a second castrating force located within the European 'Other'.

An interesting result appears to emerge from this competition between the two 'Others'. The double focus of the castration anxiety removes any direct concern to find meaning or wholeness in the body of a woman. The film appears to operate a kind of structure of recall in which, having found that Mory has 'gone over the cliff' at the beginning, Anta remembers their joint struggle to escape from their marginal position between two cultures. In this structure of recall she is situated in a position of loss since she mourns Mory whose desire has been closed off. But despite this overall structure, in which Anta is constructed in relation to Mory's desire, most of the film is not organized around a subjectivity which is based on the look at Anta's body. A space is left for Anta's desire because she is not perpetually locked into a masculine space. The scene of sexual intercourse by the sea is a good illustration of this. The sea which offers Europe appears as a much larger space for desire than physical space between Mory and Anta. Space appears to open for Anta's desire, in that she actually boards the ship ready to sail for Europe.

This leads to the speculation that one might invert the kind of argument put forward by Homi Bhabha which seeks to displace the fixity of cultural and racial identity by reference to the psychoanalytic account of fetishism.⁴⁷ This account of fetishism is located in the infant's denial of the mother's lack of a penis. Like so much of psychoanalysis it appears to locate the origin of difference in the absolute difference of male and female bodies. Does not the emergence of Anta's desire in a way which is not implicated directly in masculine subjectivity suggest that the absolutes of psychoanalysis can be displaced within a field of cultural difference?⁴⁸

The discussion of *Touki-Bouki* and *Memories of Underdevelopment* points to the problem of relating meaning to the formal properties of the film text. The development of psychoanalytic discussion of film has tended to focus on formal characteristics such as the role of the 'look' and other textual operations which construct the subjectivity of the viewer. The discussion of psychoanalysis and film has taken place against a background assumption that the main differentiating factor within the audience is gender. Can we assume that the 'look' of the camera and the related gendering of subjectivity are so important when the audience is experiencing an automatic distancing effect, because they are dealing with an alien culture? As Teshome Gabriel remarks, an American fiction film might be treated like a documentary in other cultures.⁴⁹ It is very difficult, for example, to gauge from a distance how much hostility we are supposed to feel to Sergio in *Memories of Underdevelopment* (which would counteract the implication of the spectator in his rape/seduction of Helena), or how we are to regard Anta and Mory's desire to go to Paris.

The influence of assumptions about the audience on accounts of

⁴⁷ Homi K. Bhabha 'The other question - the stereotype and colonial discourse' *Screen* vol. 24 no. 6 (1983) pp. 26-7.

⁴⁸ Bhabha's own discussion of the psychoanalytic consequences of positioning between the two cultures is concerned with the possibility of decentring the signs of nationhood. See 'A question of survival: nations and psychic states' in James Donald (ed.) *Psychoanalysis and Cultural Theory: thresholds* (London: Macmillan 1991) pp. 100-101.

⁴⁹ Gabriel 'Colonialism and Law and Order' criticism p. 141.

textual subjectivity can be seen in the differing responses of commentators to *De Cierta Manera/One Way or Another* (Sara Gomez, Cuba 1974). Julianne Burton sees the film as having a deep patriarchal bias, a reaction which can perhaps be understood from the final sequence where Mario and Yolanda walk off into the distance while a song from Guillermo suggests that women are the source of all problems.⁵⁰ Other writers have claimed that the film is a feminist critique of Cuban macho values. For Chanan, the film 'maps the social relationships it portrays on to the spaces, physical and institutional, in which they occur'.⁵¹ This sets the critique of macho values in a narrative which allows 'a living field of possibilities arising from the constraints and sanctions of the different social spaces which these people inhabit'.⁵² Thus, for Chanan, the film suggests that the revolution can work out the antagonisms of gender. For E. Ann Kaplan and Annette Kuhn, however, the crucial thrust of the feminist argument is through the juxtaposition of documentary and fiction discourses in order to raise questions for the spectator about both discourses.⁵³ Kaplan's account suggests that the documentary and fiction discourses represent internal (psychological) and external (social) change respectively. Kuhn rightly points to the way transitions are made from obvious documentary footage with voice over to documentary-style interviews with fiction characters. She argues that 'this has the effect of cutting off identification and relativizing the acting in later sequences'.⁵⁴ So do we take the film's last sequence as evidence of patriarchal bias? Or do we take the opening of institutional space within the personal fiction as an optimistic account of the possibilities of the revolution? Or do we see the spectator's position undercut by the juxtaposition of the discourses of documentary and fiction? It seems to me that much of this can only be settled by questions of context rather than attributing automatic results to formal strategies and narrative structures. It is difficult to establish from a distance, for example, how much irony is intended in the use of Guillermo's song, or how different audiences will sense the exploration of the social space of gender, or react to mixtures of fiction and documentary in a context where documentary has been used, perhaps, for much revolutionary exhortation.

If, though, context and the specific cultural formation of the audience do make a difference to the reading of a film we may question the ready dismissal of commercial cinema adopted since Solanas and Getino developed the idea of Third Cinema. Their argument is that the commercial cinema (seen as projecting the world view of US finance capital) is a 'cinema of spectacle' which uses 'hermetic structures that are born and die on the screen'⁵⁵, and thus has a transparent ideological purpose. However, such a reductionist view is called into question by Alea's proposal, discussed above, for a critical appropriation of the cinema of

⁵⁰ Burton, 'Marginal cinemas and mainstream critical theory', p. 2.

⁵¹ Chanan, 'The Cuban Image', p. 289.

⁵² Ibid. p. 290.

⁵³ E. Ann Kaplan, *Women and Film: both sides of the camera* (New York and London: Methuen, 1983), pp. 190-194; Annette Kuhn, *Women's Pictures* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982), pp. 162-4.

⁵⁴ Kuhn, *ibid.* p. 164.

⁵⁵ Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, 'Towards a Third Cinema', in Michael Chanan (ed.), *25 Years of Latin American Cinema* (London: BFI/Channel 4, 1983), p. 20.

spectacle for Third World needs, an appropriation which requires from the critic a greater understanding of popular cinema and culture in the Third World

An example of this is Rosie Thomas' approach to the national cinema of India, showing how it draws on an indigenous cultural tradition. By looking at questions of narrative structure, modes of address and conventions of verisimilitude, she gives an account of Indian cinema in its own terms rather than as a projection of US ideology.⁵⁶ Ravi Vasudevan, similarly, points to conflicting ideological currents within Indian films touching on social issues in the 1950s. A film such as *Mother India* (Mehboob Khan, 1957) can be said to make implicit anticolonialist allusions, while at the same time employing conscious exoticization in the hope of reaching western markets. And *Gunga Jumna* (Nitin Bose, 1961) fits Vasudevan's pattern in that the protagonists move between poles not so much in class terms 'but between stark and melodramatically defined moral oppositions in which criminality and corruption are ranged against innocence, purity and sensitivity'.⁵⁷ The two brothers, who are subject to the depredations of a corrupt landlord, are divided by their response to the crimes committed against them. One brother becomes a policeman who finally has to shoot down the other who has become a bandit. Melodrama, according to Vasudevan, allows social divisions to be placed on the agenda within the framework of concerns about the construction of a nation. But Vasudevan also points to the need to set melodrama against a Hindu tradition of renunciation which appears, for instance, to guide the behaviour of the brother who follows the path of the law.

A similar complexity of context and ideological cross-currents is demonstrated in Tomaselli's account of the cinema under apartheid. He describes the development of a township gangster genre within a white-run film industry for blacks, subsidized by the government for patently propagandist purposes. These films, like American gangster films, are said to have the moral that 'crime does not pay'.⁵⁸ However, as *Mapantsula* (Oliver Schmitz, South Africa, 1988) suggests, the expectations of the gangster genre can be manoeuvred to effective radical, anti-apartheid ends. In an interview with Teshome Gabriel, Sembene talks of 'taking advantage of nationalist attitudes to bring about the creation of a national cinema'.⁵⁹ The argument here is that radical practice can be developed from one possible offshoot of bourgeois nationalism, commercial national cinema.

Indeed, in the African context, Diawara's account of the three different types of film at FESPACO in 1989 suggests that popular and commercially viable African cinema is developing especially in the Social Realist strand, where popular music stars are being used to draw crowds in. The popular appeal of the singer Papa Wemba in *La Vie est Belle* (Ngangura Mweze and Benoit Lamy, Zaire, 1986) is

⁵⁶ Rosie Thomas 'Indian cinema – pleasures and popularity' *Screen* vol 26 nos 3–4 (1985) p 120

⁵⁷ Ravi Vasudevan 'Indian commercial cinema' *Screen* vol 31 no 4 (1990) p 452

⁵⁸ Keyan Tomaselli *The Cinema of Apartheid: Race and Class in South African Film* (London: Routledge 1989) p 73

⁵⁹ Gabriel 'Third Cinema in the Third World' p 113

enhanced by casting him as an aspiring musician coming from rural poverty to Kinshasa. This allows observations on relations between the rich elite and the impoverished masses while using Papa Wemba as a vehicle for the desires of the dispossessed.⁶⁰ The politics described in these films is mainly populist but they offer an opportunity for more radical intervention. *Sarraouina* (Med Hondo, Burkina Faso, 1987) clearly involves elements of spectacle and myth which have been exploited before in, for instance, the American Western (even if, in the end, the effectiveness of *Sarraouina* as leader is through the symbolic force of her resistance rather than the Western's use of violence)⁶¹ If the films that Diawara describes have a formal resemblance to films from the West then it is useful to mention Boughedir's comment on the work, which apparently offers the same signifying elements as Western films, but 'often effects a subtle inversion of their usual function'⁶²

In conclusion I wish to refer to the spatial metaphor discussed at the beginning. I have suggested that this has been used to provide a neat dividing line between antithetical practices of the First and Third World. In fact the tendency to dualism in discussing Third Cinema, noted by Kobena Mercer as a weakness in the work of Teshome Gabriel⁶³, is fairly widespread in discussing the Third World (as the metropolis/periphery image shows). I have tried throughout this essay to suggest ways in which certain dualisms might be oversimplifications which in some cases reinforce the cultural domination which is supposed to be overturned. The dualisms which I have questioned have included the oppositions between First World theory and Third World practice, western culture and Third World tradition, western individual psychology and Third World collectivity, and western film form versus non-western film form. Does this support the argument that the geographical boundaries of Third World Cinema should be dissolved to produce a category of Third Cinema? Homi Bhabha has pointed to the problem of overlaying cultural/racial categories on the economic structures of imperialism

the originality of the colonial context is that the economic substructure is also a superstructure . . . you are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich. This is why Marxist analysis should be slightly stretched every time we have to do with a colonial problem.⁶⁴

He develops an argument from this for a 'Third Space' which eludes the 'politics of polarity'⁶⁵ and takes into account the process by which 'each political object is displacing in relation to the other'⁶⁶ It seems to me that a project which seeks to tackle relations between cultural/racial divisions and economic structures cannot ignore the inherently polarizing effects of the historical processes called imperialism and neocolonialism. The relations of 'exploitation and

⁶⁰ Diawara. *African cinema today* p. 111

⁶¹ *Ibid.* p. 117

⁶² Ferid Boughedir. *Aesthetics: the two major schools of African cinema* in Angela Martin (ed.) *African Cinema: the context of production* (London: BFI, 1982) p. 84

⁶³ Mercer. *Third Cinema* at Edinburgh p. 97

⁶⁴ Bhabha. *The other question* p. 31

⁶⁵ Homi K. Bhabha. *The commitment to theory* in Jim Pines and Paul Willemen (eds) *Questions of Third Cinema* p. 131

⁶⁶ Bhabha. *The commitment to theory* p. 119

■ Paul Willemen 'The Third Cinema question: notes and reflections' in Jim Pines and Paul Willemen (eds), *Questions of Third Cinema* p 3

'domination' referred to by Bhabha⁷ polarize at certain moments in a way that demands the kind of commitment that Fanon thought necessary. Instead of trying to elude polarities completely it might be more appropriate to develop a Third Cinema related to the historical moment, 'a historically analytic yet culturally specific mode of cinematic discourse' as Paul Willemen puts it.⁸ At the beginning I noted a remark by Ian Roxborough that 'the notion of dependency defines a paradigm rather than a specific theory'. In the economic sphere the historical phenomenon of imperialism and its aftermath can encompass diverse consequences across the countries of the Third World. In each of those countries specific relations may exist between the cultural sphere and the economic – there may or may not be, for instance, an indigenous commercial film industry, or even a transnational indigenous commercial film industry, such as might develop in Africa. The historical relation of dependency and the history of colonialism/neocolonialism have involved moments of sharp polarization; the diversity of cultural, social and economic contexts produce reasons to question the results of that polarization. I have tried to argue here that we must recognize the forces for polarization without projecting the moments of polarization into cultural dualism. There is not one single theory of film at issue here although there may be, because of the historical legacy, one political debate around Third World film which is relevant to diverse social and economic and cultural contexts.

Delaying the cut: the space of performance in *Lightning Over Water*

IVONE MARGULIES

¹ *The Theater and its Double*
trans. Mary Caroline Richards
(New York: Grove Press, 1958)
p. 13

² *Mort tous les après-midi* in
Où est ce que le cinéma? vol. I
(Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1958)
p. 70. My translation.

³ The actual quote from Cezanne
is: 'Things are disappearing. If
you want to see anything, you
have to hurry' in Wim Wenders
*The Logic of Images: Essays and
Conversations* trans. Michael
Hoffman (London: Faber and
Faber, 1991), p. 1.

⁴ Accounts of the film and its
history can be found in: Wim
Wenders, *The Logic of Images*
pp. 101–102; Tom Farrell, 'Nick
Ray's German friend Wim
Wenders and Making deals and
matching actions' an interview
with Ed Lachman, the film's
cinematographer in *Wide Angle*
vol. 5 no. 4 (1983). Other
important reports are Farrell's
'We can't go home again' on
Nick Ray's last movies and Jon
Jost's 'Wrong move: a resentful
description of his own
involvement and ousting from
the production of a film with
Ray' in *Sight and Sound* vol. 50
no. 2 (1981).

And if there is still one hellish truly accursed thing in our time, it
is our artistic dallying with forms, instead of being like victims
burnt at the stake, signalling through the flames
Antonin Artaud¹

On the screen the toreador dies every afternoon
Andre Bazin²

Wim Wenders has said, after Cezanne, that one has to throw oneself
after things before they disappear.³ *Lightning Over Water/Nick's
Movie* (1980) is organized around an 'actual' and absolute
disappearance – Nicholas Ray's death.

In March of 1979, Ray and Wenders began a collaborative project
intended to have Ray film once again. Although Wenders had
committed himself to help Ray arrange financing for a film, it is
Ray's critical condition, terminally ill with cancer, that defines the
urgency of this autobiographic project.⁴ In a scripted scene the two
directors play backgammon and discuss the film they will make
together. Ray sketches a storyline about a man who forges his own
paintings and sails off in a Chinese junk festooned with red flags in
search for a cure for cancer. This is one of several drafts of fiction in
a film that never manages to stray too far from documentary reality.

At the time of *Nick's Movie* Wenders was involved in the
production of *Hammert* (1982) and an international crew gathers
several times in three months to film in between Ray's hospital stays

and Wenders' flights to California. The result is a fragmentary collage of directorial perspectives. Ray is shown asleep in a scene which he directs, waking up in a scene directed by Wenders. In the meanwhile Tom Farrell, an ex-student and friend of Ray's, is filmed recording in Betacam video – a random footage that includes rehearsals, Ray's lecture on *The Lusty Men* (1952) in Vassar College and quotidian scenes.

Nick's Movie was first shown at Cannes in May 1980 and was reshaped by Wenders under its present title *Lightning Over Water* shortly thereafter. In the first version (edited by Peter Przygodda), the images have an apparently random order, suggesting in a cinema vérité mode, the experiential fragmentariness of life itself.

Przygodda's editing attempts to reproduce the simultaneity of the event and its filmic recording, and avoids the linearity that would signal a fictional construction. The second version, *Lightning Over Water*, presents a major change. Wenders' voice over fills in the gaps of origins and a linear narrative reconstitutes the film as 'natural chronology'.⁵

To film death at work is, some say, morally controversial.⁶ It involves handling representation in a precarious balance with a physical, contingent reality. The tension between registering a rapidly shifting reality and shaping a cinematic narrative warrants an investigation into the relations between the mediated nature of film and the immediate uniqueness of performance.

Although some effort has been made to theorize the issue of film performance, it is usually discussed in terms of acting.⁷ In 'Film and the performance frame' James Naremore examines several acting conceptions ranging from method acting to Erving Goffman's presentation of the self in everyday life. Chaplin's open theatricality, De Niro's biological naturalism (his fatness in *Raging Bull* [1980]), and Belmondo's shift between 'aleatory and theatrical codes' in *Breathless* (1959) are some of his examples for gradations on a nature/culture axis. Still, he considers Ray's self-presentation in *Lightning Over Water* a liminal situation that expands the 'performance frame' . . . until we can see its virtual limits.⁸

I am interested in investigating the virtual limits of performance further. As Naremore suggests, Ray's performance is neither a matter of a successful naturalism nor of a reflexive play with conventions. My claim is that the blurring of distinctions between organic behaviour and dramatic enactment present in *Lightning Over Water* can only be understood in the context of performance art. This blurring is, moreover, at the core of Jacques Derrida's questioning of presence and it is this enquiry that guides my analysis of the film.

The issues raised a *propos* of *Lightning Over Water* – the authenticating effects of real time representation, the fluctuation between realism and actuality – were first brought up, in more or

5 Przygodda's attempt to represent a third person objectivity exists as the video version released (undoubtedly by mistake) by Pacific Arts Video under the title of *Lightning Over Water*. After seeing this version screened at Cannes Wenders says he realized that to fashion the film as a documentary would be a betrayal of his and Ray's original intent. Now it's really cinema. I added a first person narration.

the film is told in continuity as a series of events. To lean *Lightning* on the side of fiction was to make a complete film not give the impression of fragments of unfinished projects. Michel Boujut. *Wim Wenders* (Paris: Edilg, 1982) p. 83.

6 See Jon Jost's 'Wrong Move' which offers a personal version of Bazin's proscription of the representation of death discussed here.

7 See James Naremore, *Acting in The Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988). Richard Dyer, *Stars* (London: BFI, 1979) and Tony Stephens, 'Signs of Life: acting and Presentation in Screen Education no. 36' (1980). Outside the frame of acting one of the most provocative essays is Stephen Heath's 'Film performance: repetition time: notes around Structural materialist film' in *Questions of Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981). In his article 'Approaches to performance' Grahame Thompson reviews the literature on performance: discussing Erving Goffman, Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes and Heath. *Screen*, vol. 26, no. 5 (1985).

8 James Naremore, 'Film and the performance frame' in *Film Quarterly*, vol. 38, no. 2 (1984–5), p. 15.

Nicholas Ray. *Lightning Over Water*, (courtesy of the BFI)



less problematized forms, in sixties and early seventies experimental art. During this period Happenings, Body and Performance Art staged a spilling of representation into life, variously questioning the mandate of modernist, self-referential art. The main trope for the contamination of Art through life is *real time representation*. In Fluxus Group and John Cage's performances, in Allen Kaprow's Happenings and in Chris Burden's and Vito Acconci's self-inflicted marathons of bodily restriction, the literal, actual event is presented as indistinguishable from representation. Extended duration tests the limits of the bodies of performer and spectator. Their endurance serves as proof of the actuality of their mutual presence.

In the realm of recorded image, the authenticating use of video in *Lightning Over Water* is also best understood in contrast to video art. Most experimental video done in the early seventies revolves around confirming endlessly the delusions of self-presence through temporal displacement: Bruce Nauman's *Lip Synch* (1969), Peter Campus's *mem* and *dor* installations (1974), Richard Serra's *Boomerang* (1974), Linda Benglis's *Now* (1973), Joan Jonas's *Vertical Roll* (1972), are involved in experiencing the disparities of a presence never fully and instantaneously present 'Now' and 'I' were submitted in these works to a constant vexing; they were 'screened' through video technology, which delivered at most a mirrored split identity.

Within the frame of seventies experimentation marked by notions of presence and duration, Wenders' use of intense textual fragmentation and of real time representation (and long takes) can

9 Wenders' early shorts are clearly influenced by the phenomenological thrust and the minimalist structural impetus present in American avant garde – Warhol in particular – the loop printing serial structure in *Same Player Shoots Again* (a three minute shot repeated five times in a different color) – the use of the film roll as shot length in *Silver City* – each shot corresponding to 30 meter roll – and the use of music as a slight difference to be noticed against the image in *Alabama* are examples of this influence. See Jan Dawson, *Wim Wenders* (New York: New York Zoetrope 1976) pp. 10–17–19.

10 Wenders admits his departure from a purely phenomenological record in his avowed desire for narrative. That's why I would say my only influence is Ozu, he claims when asked about Warhol. See Dawson, *Wim Wenders* p. 10.

be seen then as an answer to another cinematic father besides Nicholas Ray. Andy Warhol, on whose work Wenders' early short films are modelled, constitutes the true subtext in *Lightning Over Water*.⁹ Warhol's real time films (*Empire* [1964], *Eat* [1965], *Sleep* [1963]) are undoubtedly the main paradigm in thinking about film performance. The insistence on representation over time creates a deceptive effect of presence in which both figurative and literal aspects of the image are experienced in turns – along with the scene and the filmic body the spectator senses his/her own body.

Lightning Over Water narrativizes the phenomenological project to which both Wenders and Warhol, differently, subscribe: to register the course of time.¹⁰ And while Wenders looks as much to Warhol as to Ozu, to escape the long shadow projected by Jean-Luc Godard, his project is, as I intend to show, a romantic betrayal of the radical consequences of time passing.

To pit performance against film, experimental (performance art, Warhol) against narrative work, gestures toward a polemic that is pursued here mainly in its theoretical implications. A close reading of the film allows me to question as keenly the romantic constraints of narrativization with which Performance Art is especially complicitous.

The distinction between autobiography and diary is fundamental to an understanding of what is at issue in *Lightning Over Water*. If the precondition of autobiography is its retrospective character, the practice of autobiography resituates the events of a life as elements of a process of narrativization. Its end conditions its beginning, both as writing and as meaning. The written diary, on the other hand, consists of nonsystematic, discontinuous notations and its main relation to reality is one of contingency. Not only does one not know what is going to happen, but there are no guarantees that what finally happens is not itself dependent on stylistic chance. The authenticity of the diary is predicated precisely on its unpredictable and fragmentary nature, on its inability to form itself into a coherent 'story'.

In film, however, the distinction between autobiography and diary is less well defined. *Lightning Over Water* oscillates between the spontaneity and contingency of diary notation and the more mediated practice of autobiography. Some of its images, especially those shot in video, attest to an immediacy of recording, while others carry the weight of the cinematic apparatus. The strategic positioning of the camera, the choreographed travelling shots and correct lighting are reminders of the demands of fiction by pointing to a deferral between event and representation. A 'film surface' is further constituted by voice-over narration and smooth editing. That is, a narrative is produced which is intent on effecting authenticity, but is ultimately dependent on fictional underpinnings. Moreover, the two temporal orders of diary and autobiography run in

seemingly opposite directions. The first assumes no knowledge of an end, is discontinuous and dependent on day-to-day events, while the other is inevitably a retroactive reading: Nick is dead and the film is shot. Nothing is left but to reconstitute this filmic material as a linear sequence of events.¹¹

The diary structure works as a nodal point for two aspects of Wenders' cinema: a descriptive, non-explanatory mode of representation and a transitory limning of identity, the filling-in of the void of a *weisse Wand* (white screen) with a film title – *Nick's Movie*. Wim Wenders' initials, inscribed on neon in a cinema marquee at the end of *Kings of the Road* (1975), hover at the brink of a certain mode of artisanal cinema which is threatened by large scale commercial distribution. Both *The State of Things* (1982) and *Lightning Over Water/Nick's Movie* constitute Wenders' signature and statement of cinematic identity in the face of the parallel production of *Hammett* at Coppola's Zoetrope studio.

On another level, the diary form signifies a desire to maintain a minimal margin between 'writing' and living. The adoption of the diary format for a record of Ray's last weeks of life intimates most forcefully the need to modulate differentials between representation and life. The knowledge of his impending death hangs over the film, suggesting in its pathos the futility of dramatic action. One of Ray's first comments to Nick is, 'Does it seem like acting, Wim?' As played out on the field of one man's body, the impossibility of obliterating the 'difference' that comprises representation raises the crucial issue of performance. Thirty years ago Allan Kaprow called for 'Happenings'.

The dividing line between art and life should remain as fluid and indistinct as possible and time and space should remain as variable and discontinuous so that, by continuing to be open phenomena capable of giving way to change and the unexpected, performance takes place only once.¹²

The one-time-only event is the central question addressed by performance art and its significance has been weighed on the battlefield of metaphysics (Artaud's *The Theater and Its Double*) and deconstruction (Derrida's 'The Theater of Cruelty' and 'La parole soufflée' in *Writing and Difference*¹³). In choosing the body as the privileged site of an unrepeatable action, performance art insists on the possibility of unity and self-presence only to amplify their deceptive nature as a tracing, as *différance*. At stake in *Lightning Over Water* are the forms and directions this deceptive lure can take, given differences between immediate activity (performance) and the mediated nature of film.

While performance operates along a continuum between art and life, cinema adds a morbid factor that mars the potentially positivistic aspects of this sought equivalence (between

¹¹ This tension was succinctly posed by David James in defining the diary film *vis à vis* the written diary in *Diary/Film/Diary film*. Jonas Mekas *Walden Framework* (1989) interpreting like a diarist drawing conclusions at the end of the day: the narrator looks at the footage several years later after it was shot and directs us to find in it a myth of loss and renewal in which the practice and institutions of cinema come to replace the lost homeland of Lithuania.

¹² Quoted in Josette Ferral *Performance and theatricality: the subject demystified*. *Modern Drama* no. 25 p. 173.

¹³ Jacques Derrida *Writing and Difference* trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge 1979).

representation and reality) – the recurrence of the same dying body through representation. Repetition as a fact of mechanical reproduction constitutes a concrete sign of the failure of a metaphysics based on uniqueness and self-presence. The notion of simultaneity, central to performance art is easily translated into terms proper to cinematic representation: the long take, extended real-time shot. Wenders, however, postpones this technique to the end of the film. Up until Ray's direct-address long take, Wenders articulates the concomitance of experienced event and its filmic recording through an intense textual fragmentation.

As opposed to conventional cinema vérité, Wenders' production of transparency is anything but an effect of unmediated reality. The film unfolds diachronically through a series of images that at times refer to the same fictional moment (Nick waking up, for instance). Though reflexive in its basic thrust, the images of crew and rehearsal, as well as the video images that seem to fill in the temporal and dramatic gaps of the 35mm film, attest to a desire to expand representation as simultaneity. In this respect it is interesting to compare different modalities of representations of events as they are incorporated into the film. Within the film, Tom Farrell uses a video camera to shoot many events (seen as blown-up video footage), some of which are also filmed by Wenders in 35mm. Farrell also keeps a written diary in which he supposedly registers the 'actual' chronology of the filming. In the film he is seen constantly videotaping, and the result of his work (his video images) comprise a substantial portion of the film. Insofar as video is connected to the ideology of documentary through its instantaneity and ability to register the unrepeatable event at close range, the video images are coopted in *Lightning Over Water* to stand for the truth or underside of filmmaking.

Emulating the effect of immediacy that characterizes video images, Wenders makes use of different textures and temporal and spatial relations as if linearly unfolding the simultaneity of images and textures present in the split-screen structure of Ray's last film *We Can't Go Home Again* (1973).

The implications of adopting a diary format for *Lightning Over Water*, however, extend beyond an analogy to video recording (in its casual, home-movie quality) to the locus of authorship within the film. Although it is co-signed by Nicholas Ray and Wim Wenders, Ray's deterioration within the film forces a gradual surrendering of directorial decisions from Ray to Wenders (plus Farrell). Besides his final editing of the film, Wenders' usurpation of directorial authority and suppression of Nick's presence is twice made explicit. One significant scene with respect to this transfer of authorship – Nick's long-take monologue – will be discussed in detail. The other occasion is Wenders' invocation of Nick's presence through a voice-over reading of passages from Nick's diary. Nick's handwriting is

¹⁴ The idea of narrative murder is developed by Timothy Corrigan in his article 'Cinematic snuff: German friends and narrative murders' *Cinema Journal* vol. 24 no. 2 (1985)

¹⁵ Screenplay by Wim Wenders and Chris Sievernich. *Nick's Film: Lightning Over Water* (Frankfurt: Zweitausendeins 1981) p. 327

¹⁶ Exemplified in the instantaneous doubling through which the Polaroid photos in Wenders' films are figured as confirmations of the identity between representation and reality, this anxious search for identity can only attest to a prior loss. The image of Dennis Hopper in *The American Friend* covering himself with a continuous flow of Polaroids of his own face condenses the image of existential angst that mobilizes Wenders' characters from Phillip in *Alice in the Cities* to Bruno and Robert in *Kings of the Road*

¹⁷ It is in fact this double temporality that lends *Lightning Over Water* its film noir effect. The knowledge of death – a dead end as well as the film's end – *tout court* is stated at the level of the voice-over narration. While on screen the protagonists seem to strive as if it still mattered – the duped or lost character in film noir mutters what turns out to be an always belated reflection. For a brilliant analysis of the use of voice-over narration and its centrality in articulating a confused subjectivity in film noir see Paul Arthur, *On the Brink: Film Noir and Cold War America 1945–1957* (New York: Praeger Publishers 1993)

superimposed over aerial views of New York City several times in the course of the film, including the very last, frozen shot. Spoken by Wenders, however, Nick's words perform, through their pronominal bearing (the 'I' in question), an authorial dissolve from one 'director' to the other. Indeed, an Oedipal relation between Wenders and Ray is a stated theme of the film. The 'narrative murder'¹⁴ of Ray is finally exposed in the appropriation of 'the father's' proper name by Wenders who voices the last scrawled words of the film, ostensibly from Nick's diary: 'I saw the face of my mother. Nick, Nick, Nick.'¹⁵

The diary form here becomes revealing given the usually complex construction of identity in Wenders' films.¹⁶ In his road movies (for example, *Alice in the Cities* [1974] and *Kings of the Road*) characters are in constant transit, mapping their opaque and alienated identities against an ever-changing scenic background. In *Lightning Over Water* the characters in question are, significantly, the directors. This ongoing project of identity, of which a fundamental subtext is Wenders' relation to classical American cinema, is here enacted as a friendly gesture in an Oedipal framework. If the slightly off-beat quality of Wenders' films is a function of Wenders' ambivalent relation to American cinema, the 'I'm a stranger here myself' quality of Nicholas Ray's relation to Hollywood is fully inscribed in Wenders' formulation of his own cinematic ontogeny.

The link between the two directors is articulated in *Lightning Over Water* through visual and verbal reminders of Ray's role in Wenders' *The American Friend* (1977) and an emulation of Ray's filmic style (for example, the adoption of Ray-like crane shots). The opening shot of *Lightning Over Water* echoes the last shot of *The American Friend* in which Derwatt (the 'dead' painter played by Ray), walks along the Hudson River, and it also recalls the first shot of that film in which Ripley/Hopper comes to see Derwatt/Ray in Soho. The resounding phrase 'The American Friend' and its slippage into *Lightning Over Water* endows Ray and Wenders with a common history, and encourages the tilting of directorial authority from Ray to Wenders.

While Nick's presence figures the urgency of death as the pretext of storytelling, Wenders' voice-over creates a fake subjective space of interiority. The anxious tone of his narration is meant to verify Wenders' project in its sincerity, but it works ultimately to question it. In its excess of denegation – the constant raising of doubt as to whether or not to go on filming, spoken over images that have already been recorded and edited – this diaristic narration stumbles over its professed 'unpredictability'. Again, a double temporality is at play: the temporality inscribed in the profilmic events and also a superimposed time, that of editing and of voice-over narration.¹⁷

In his compulsive doubting, Wenders creates a subjective interiority that becomes the space of his own private drama. This

parallel subplot is, however, basic to the dramatic telos of the film. As a fictional device, the expression of doubt dilates the temporal dimensions of an event, projecting the existential experience of the present into the future. Its constant threat of interruption imposes a complicity in the spectator by creating a desire for the conclusion. Early in the film Wenders says to Nick, 'I thought that I could find myself being attracted to your weakness or to your suffering and if I realized I was I think I would have to leave you.'¹⁸ That is, he would have to stop the film.

Wenders' voice-over commentary is an incessant thematization of the moral dilemmas of filming death as process. In his hesitation and fear about continuing to record, Wenders echoes André Bazin's observations regarding cinematic realism. Bazin's defence of the long take as a guarantee of a durational equivalency of reality and representation finds its limit in his article 'Mort tous les après-midis'. In an attempt to describe an even greater (in his eyes) ontological contradiction than the inevitable reproduction of 'real' moments in cinematic representation, Bazin ends up short-circuiting his whole theory of ontological integrity at a precise, metaphysical juncture. He says:

I can't repeat a sole instant of my life, but any one of those instants cinema can repeat indefinitely in front of me. Death is for human beings the unique moment par excellence. It is in relation to it that the qualitative time of life defines itself retrospectively. It marks the limits of conscious duration and of the objective time of things. . . . We accept [cinematic repetition], despite its ontological contradictions, to be a kind of objective replica of memory. Two instants however radically escape this concession of conscience: the sexual act and Death.¹⁹

For Bazin the inscription of a moment that should remain singular, private, and therefore unique, into the circuit of repetition is an 'ontological obscenity', a 'metaphysical violation'.

As Philip Rosen has pointed out, a contradictory conception of time is inscribed in Bazin's ontology, sapping his promotion of realism. The obsession with offsetting the threat of death justifies for Bazin the demand for realistic representation. This 'preservative function', however, freezes time, preventing the phenomenological experience of 'change'.²⁰

Wenders faces a similar problem with respect to the film as an enduring object and filmmaking as a temporal process. The desire to conflate two bodies in *Lightning Over Water* – one biological (Ray's) and the other cinematic – leads inevitably to the limits of realistic representation. Through this film's thematics of death, a confrontation between a natural order and that of mechanical reproduction is left unsettled. The existential bond uniting living and recording, the relatively unquestioned *raison d'être* of a diary, its

¹⁸ Sievernich: *Nick's Film: Lightning Over Water*, p. 70.

¹⁹ Bazin: 'Mort tous les après-midi', pp. 68–69.

²⁰ Philip Rosen: 'History of image: image of history: subject and ontology in Bazin', *Wide Angle*, vol. 9, no. 4 (1987).

21 Catherine Russell 'Wim Wenders' death as ontological obscenity and narrative necessity in *Narrative Mortality: Death and Closure in International Post War Cinema* PhD dissertation New York University (1989)

continuous flux, is put to a halt as the uniqueness of this link is threatened in the operations of textuality.

The desire to film death at work is stated in the manner of an excuse. Wenders' voice-over commentary admits to the 'ontological obscenity' while moving towards – or rather, away – from its execution. In a scene in which Wenders and Ray discuss the characters for the film they will 'make together', Wenders asks Nick, 'Why make the detour of turning him [Nick's character] into a painter? It's you, Nick, why take the step away?' As Catherine Russell suggests, Wenders' film is an 'elaborate exercise in taking the inevitable "step away into representation"'.²¹ By proposing more veracity in the narrative characterization, Wenders eludes a 'crime' significantly more radical than using Nick's life as a referent. Facing a possible collapse of narrative under the asymptotic conflation of the two impermeable materialities of Nick's body and the filmic body, Wenders buys time, stretching the narrative out in a plaintive hesitation.

Watching Nick's image on a TV monitor, Wenders says, 'Like a very precise instrument, the camera showed clearly and mercilessly that his time was running out. No, you couldn't see it with your bare eyes, there was always hope. But not in the camera.' This observation illustrates one of the forms through which repetition is invoked in this film: an elegiac mourning over the turning of reality into a sign, of transforming reality into representation, into a repeatable event. This mournful tone is inscribed in *Lightning Over Water's* ambivalent conception of time. On the one hand time is seen as a teleology. Death figures as the limit that allows the reconstitution of a fiction of unity and identity – the last moment, the cut which gives retrospective meaning to an otherwise non-significant succession of singular moments. On the other hand, time is the figure of repeatability and continuous slippage of tenses, a subtle *muse-en-abîme* in which the multiplication of representations (video on monitors, blown-up video, acting/non-acting characters) questions the very status of an original Nick/subject and moment/time.

There are two images which condense in a significant way this ambivalence. One of them is the image of a Chinese junk which carries an urn with Nick's ashes and a 35mm camera whose revolving viewer frames at random the river, the Manhattan skyline, the boat. This image is the only one that is intercut with the diachronic unfolding of the film. It works as an intermittent reminder of another, transcendent temporality that brackets life in its internal logic and validates its representation as a 'natural chronology'. This image is one of timelessness, but it has its basis in an allegorical reading of Nick's physical presence as natural decay; the ashes, as the pulverization of the body, are transfigured into the camera and its floating scraps of film. The recurrence of the image

22 Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (London: NLB, 1977), p. 166.

of the Chinese junk binds the timelessness of a romantically idealized transcendence to the unavoidable certainty of history seen as nature and decay. According to Walter Benjamin, allegorical signification is bound to a 'subjection to death, because death digs most deeply the jagged line of demarcation between physical nature and significance.'²² The transubstantiation of Nick's body into the Chinese junk provides an image for Nick's body that is detachable from the filmic body. Through this illustrative allegory, the issue of filmic performance, the performance of the film in its frame-by-frame expenditure, is thus displaced.



Lightning Over Water,
(courtesy of the BFI)

A second image of temporal dislocation in *Lightning Over Water* occurs when Nick, Wim, Susan Schwartz and Tom watch Nick's 'experimental' film *We Can't Go Home Again* in Nick's loft. On his way to the bathroom Nick stops to watch a closeup of a younger, healthier Nick projected on the screen beside him. The image of the two Nicks jeopardizes any claim of identity between these remotely related doubles. Its pathos is instantaneous as time becomes a measure of an irretrievable loss. The future of this split image is already present as the third, unrecorded image of Nick in death.

Two non-exclusive readings are invited by this scene. It could be read as a continual present tense being inscribed within the filmic image as the fate of representation. A second reading neutralizes the intriguing presentness of this image to coopt it as a 'natural' passage of time. Each image of Nick is seen in its referential frame: an older Nick versus a younger one, while the third absent image elicits the scene's intrinsic pathos.

The fleeting instant of (mis)recognition of identity as Nick passes himself hyperbolizes *time* as the dimension that potentially subverts realistic representation. A dead body (nature halted by time), much

²³ Philip Rosen notes in the article mentioned above the acute contradictions present in Bazin's ontology of realism when it is a matter of representing a historical myth (for example Stalin's myth).

²⁴ Stephen Heath 'Film performance: repetition time' p. 114

²⁵ Catherine Russell 'Wim Wenders' p. 17

²⁶ Sigmund Freud 'The Uncanny' [1919] in *Studies in Parapsychology* (New York: Collier Books 1963) p. 40

like a myth (history at a standstill), subverts realism in that its representation is *not* change 'mummified', but the sameness of what is already, in the real, an immutable image.²³ Despite his hesitations, Wenders whole-heartedly embraces the demise of a cinematic myth as his subject. In so doing, he seems to enhance the paradoxes of realist cinema as they are contained in Bazin's ontology. His attempt to develop a sense of an evolving, unpredictable time remains in *Lightning Over Water* in total contrast to the material essence of cinema, its inevitable stopping of time through the capacity to repeat.

One might compare Wenders' attitude toward representation with the systematic abolition of romantic residues in Andy Warhol's film practice. Warhol subjects the slickness of the ideal one-to-one identity of representation by adding nothing to representation but time. Warhol's early films expose death-at-work as being pure in-difference, a compulsive repetition that does not bother either to mask or state the 'scene of the crime', the crime being that which Stephen Heath describes in his essay 'Film performance' as the timed stops of discrete frames, the stopping of time which is made invisible through the projection of the filmic image.²⁴

In contrast to Warhol's films, time for Wenders is a measure of pathos. In consistently anchoring death to Nick's image, Wenders' version of performance is one of centring – a death-at-work that is meant to outline the subject in his or her identity. Nick's statement, 'The closer I get to my ending, the closer I am getting to rewriting my beginning', encapsulates the displacements at work in *Lightning Over Water*. The question of the performance of time, the continuity that constitutes any projected image, thus delineating a filmic surface, is taken within Wenders' project as the performance of the subject-in-time, as narrative. Insofar as Nick's life is the focus and temporal frame of this trajectory, death becomes the dramatic telos of a search for identity. Representation is reinstated within a desire for narrative. Over and above the uncertainty that pervades the film, a story is to be told. Thus some of the apprehension results from Wenders' narrative strategies which elicit curiosity as to when and if we will actually see Nick die. The risk is inscribed in each frame as an inevitable link between the process of recording – a cinematic expenditure – and its meaning for Nicholas Ray. As Russell puts it, 'the biological changes that we witness posit a unidirectional temporality that no amount of narrative repetition can completely "figure out" by making safe'.²⁵

Furthermore, Wenders' use of Ray's mortal progress as a tension propelling the narrative contains an even more fundamental tension: the uncanniness implicit in doubling. As Freud notes in his essay on the Uncanny, the double is originally invoked as an insurance against the destruction of the ego, an energetic denial of death. However, from having been an assurance of immortality, the double can also become the 'ghastly harbinger of death'.²⁶ The oscillation

between evoking and eluding the notion of identity is at the core of the uncanny and realist representation can be seen, as in Bazin, as one form of the double. In its biographical thrust, *Lightning Over Water* is structured as an exercise in conjuring away death and the uncanniness of the double through an intimation of reality at the closest proximity to an original moment.

The uncanny that threatens *Lightning Over Water* is not only death, though, but another doubling which Freud mentions as inspiring uncanniness: *coincidence*. The uncanniness of coincidence has to do with a feeling of recurrence that is intimately related to the repetition compulsion of the death drive. Coincidence and the related notion of 'fate' lend a perverse representational power to nature, as if it could 'wish' a link between unrelated events.

From the beginning, *Lightning Over Water* exploits contingency and chance as marks of drama through the alibi of the diary (which, in cinema, knows its 'end'). At one point, Wenders and Tom are returning to Nick's loft from a Soho bar, when they suddenly run towards a cab. The camera pans into the loft waiting for the two men and the closure of the scene, Wenders and Tom arrive inside and wonder about Nick's sudden departure in the cab. While the explicit staging of this scene undermines Wenders' vocal surprise, Wenders' desire to film – figured in the 'coincidentally' correct placement of the camera – is excused within a stated inevitability. As Wenders says in the context of his nightmare of a continuous insomnia, 'the camera would always be there'.

Lightning Over Water exorcizes the uncanny inscribed in the coincidence towards which the film veers: the actual recording of Nick's death and the end of filming process. The avoidance of this possibility animates the film. In *Lightning Over Water* the compulsive repetition of multi-levelled representations refer to and 'retard' the narrative towards its known closure. Through a controlled diffusion, a complex design of textures and temporalities, including fictions of spontaneity, the hospital performance of King Lear by Ray and Ronnee Blakley, and Wenders' voice over, resists the pull of coincidence between death and its representation.

The compulsive repetition that names, fears, and mourns death is also the very fabric of the delayed momentum. The end known from the start, Wenders creates a fiction of the impending and unrepresentable moment. As I have suggested, the narrative tension is maintained precisely through the multiplication of representations which only once cohere as a presence. Nick's long take is the last time he appears in the film. If extended or real time is a key axis along which a concurrence of representation and reality might be actualized, this scene constitutes an instance of Bazinian transparency at its agony. This long take does not embody the safe compromise of narrative and description prescribed by idealist realism, but something else which is actualized in

Warhol's long takes and romantically suspended by Wenders.

In a scene without action, Ray becomes – in a medium frontal shot of five minutes – a performer. If Ray has been a performer all along, insofar as his status and identity are those of 'Nick', a fictional character constructed within the conventions of naturalistic acting and staging, then this shot redefines his performance in a radical way. His long take opens a clearing in the extensive fragmentation to which the filmic body has been submitted. It stands out as a unique moment within the textual fracturing.

Ray's performance is in fact an exhaustion of the meaning of action. Formed within the Method school of acting which translates an action into the terms of psychological motivation, Ray's directorial vocabulary posits an action as a basic intention or desire that grounds the actor in his or her character. In *Lightning Over Water*, Ray textually (and verbally) defines his participation as a regaining of self-image, a bringing himself together before he dies. The deflation of enactment that takes place in the film construes a potential continuum between representation and life. Transparency as proposed by naturalistic representation and method acting is, nevertheless, exposed as ideality. It is finally subverted in the extended duration of the long take which contributes to the decentring effect of Nick's performance in the film.

At one point in this long take, in between his actual nausea and its enunciation, Nick quotes his nausea: 'You're making me sick to my stomach. Yeah. Jesus Christ I'm sick. And not with you and not because of you.' In between humming and pausing he hums, coughs, and hums, and his humming slips into coughing, threatening to become a threat, a throwing up. His facial expression does not change in between symptom and sign or at any point during the shot.²⁷ 'I'm beginning to drool,' he drools. '*Merde Merdeschmerz*', he says. 'Okay, Okay, I'm finished, what are you going to do now?' he asks Wim, who is out of frame by his side. 'Say "cut"', whispers Wenders. 'Say "cut"? Go ahead!' says Nick. 'You say "cut"', whispers Wenders. Still facing the camera, Nick says, 'Cut, cut! Go on.' 'Don't cut,' whispers Wenders. 'Don't cut,' says Nick, and then, immediately after, he says to the camera, 'Cut!' The camera remains on Nick's silent image, after his last pleading command, for five tense seconds. A black leader follows.

Nick's long take performance presents us with a troubling spectacle, that of an alternating invocation and dismissal of the fiction of unity and presence. This long take and its interruption shed light on the nature of the uncanny that haunts the film. The coincidence between death and its representation, figured as a threat of absolute transparency, hides an even more uncanny warning. Potentially contained in the extended duration of this shot and Ray's performance, the film registers a threat of non-coincidence, of *différance*.

²⁷ This procedure of acting and referring to one's action of meshing event and its account is present in rather dramatic forms in Vito Acconci's video performances *Claim Remote Control* and *Face Off*.

28 Birgit Pelzer *Performance Text(s) & Documents* (Montreal Parachute 1981) p. 28

29 The very possibility of the constitution of the performative – of words acting – is as Derrida points out predicated on the understandability of the utterance: on its status as a repeat of a coded or iterable statement. Repetition (*différance*) is therefore present in all language including the simplest of speech acts precluding thus an ideal conflation of act and word. *Margins of Philosophy* (Chicago University of Chicago Press 1982) p. 325

The imminent eruption of *différance* is made especially evident through the use of the performative, a device which in written discourse consists of words that act. Nick Ray's order to 'out', followed by an actual cut, is an example of the deployment of the performative and its 'illusion of a specular symmetry between language and reality' in cinema.²⁸ Wenders promotes the fiction of a cinematic performative, in this case Nick's voiced order, by making it appear to cause the ensuing action. As a rhetorical strategy, the act and demand of 'cut' links the diegetic with the cinematic in a figuration of absolute transparency: that is, the reality of the profilmic acts upon the film's body.

The performative can be seen as encapsulating the subversive potential of performance to promote a deception – namely that of self-presence, of an absolute identity between representation and event.²⁹ The rhetorical use of a 'cinematic performative', such as Wenders' cut in *Lightning Over Water*, reveals with utmost clarity the attempt to circumvent the dangerous circuitry between extended real time in cinema and the recurrence of *différance*. At stake in this long-take performance is the filmic body, for once dangerously and fascinatingly confused with the subject's image.

Wenders' project is actually one of deferral. The drama of *Lightning Over Water* comes from the tension between the desire for and the risks of an 'ontological obscurity'. By cutting Nick's long take, Wenders confirms the subversive, decentring potential of this performance in its extended time. The performance of time as a slippage of centre, a visual cancer that upsets subject and representation, is replaced by a transcendent blackness that anchors Nick as a diegetic source of discourse, and at the same time confirms Wenders' control of this cinematic diary. Ultimately the suspense leading up to the cut designates authorship as the control embedded in the editing process (as opposed to the chances proper to the profilmic such as acting). 'Cut!' . . . cut. The delay in the decision constitutes a painful suspense that is resolved through the good action, the 'correct' representation, that of a symbolic suspension. In its symbolic thrust and lyrical beauty, the film proposes the elimination of the body as a troubling presence.

The complex array of reflexive and narrative strategies in *Lightning Over Water* creates a structure which constantly intimates truthfulness, representing a desire for an ever closer proximity to the referent. These strategies involve not only the connotations of video instantaneity, but the deceptive implication of unity and self-presence embodied in autobiography. Wenders' vigilant camera, which acts out the fallacy of uninterrupted documentation, is equated by means of a superimposed image in Wenders' 'nightmare' with the camera mounted on the junk. The limit of this nightmare of absolute transparency is figured in the film as an allegory. Floating down the Hudson River, the camera is festooned with scraps of film

while the random framing of the revolving camera transfigures the film's decentring possibilities onto a higher level of metaphysical transcendence – an empty, bluish totality, the sky

Lightning Over Water revolves around Wenders' flirtation with representation at the moment in which it threatens to disappear. This flirtation with death, with the singularity of reality is, however, posed as a moral dilemma. The film increases this tension by relying on narrative structures, a 'film surface' presenting itself as a 'natural chronology', but which invokes another more powerful linearity, that of biological decay.

The distinction between the filmic body, in its frame-to-frame expenditure, and Nick's dying body is of paramount importance for Wenders. The invoked conflation of cinematic and natural death necessitates a rereading of Wenders' claim that cinema is the means of articulating identity.³⁰ Is the path to identity one of 'mummification'? Wenders cannot finally distinguish either his or Nick's search for identity from the process of reproduction, the eternal recurrence of sameness that defines cinematic representation.

Inscribed in the iterability of *Lightning Over Water* is the body of the subject and its appropriation by representation, the forms through which narrative is staged as an excuse for desire. The violence of Wenders' sublimation – the black leader – reverts ultimately to the intensity of what preceded it, Nick's filmic presence. In his controlled flirtation with the unstable order of performance, Wenders undercuts its radicality and transforms its erotics into a romantic longing. 'Nick, Nick, Nick.'³¹

³⁰ Cinema, says Wenders, is in a way the art of things as well as persons: becoming identical with themselves. Dawson, *Wim Wenders*, p. 12.

³¹ These are words voiced by Wenders after reading from Ray's diary. Juxtaposed to a frozen frame of the Hudson river, the inscription says: 'I looked into my face and what did I see? No granite rock of identity. Faded blue, drawn skin, and wrinkled lips. And sadness. And the wildest urge to recognize and accept the face of my mother.'

Cultural *métissage*: national formations and productive discourse in Quebec cinema and television

MARTIN ALLOR

Three overlapping developments in Quebec over the last several years have foregrounded for me the complexity of the relations between the specific institutions of cultural production and the circulation of discourses of nation and people. First, over the last two years three major tele-series, *Les filles de Caleb* (Radio-Canada, 1990–91) and *Scoop* (Radio-Canada, 1991–92) on Radio-Canada and *Montréal, ville ouverte* (TVA, 1992) on the private TVA network, have dominated the field of narrative television. This preeminence has been true at the level of viewership; all three series regularly attracted one and a half to two million viewers, peak episodes of *Les filles de Caleb* garnered more than three million (out of a total breathing population of just under seven million). More importantly, the characters, stars and stories of the three series functioned as nodal figures of broader articulations of celebrity and national identity.

Second, there has been a growing tension between the film and television production community and the Société Générale Des Industries Culturelles (SOGIC), the Quebec government's funding agency for film and television production and distribution. This tension has been centred on questions of the kinds of projects that

have been supported, the delays in subvention decisions, and the criteria used by SOGIC officers in rejecting projects. This crisis of confidence reached its paradoxical height when, at hearings of the permanent commission on culture of the Quebec National Assembly, virtually all of the representatives of the film and television sector (an extremely nationalist formation) spoke against the unilateral patriation of all regulatory and subventionary powers in the cultural domain to Quebec, displaying more administrative faith in Téléfilm Canada.

Third, the last several years have also been characterized by the emergence of a structuring public discourse, in the period leading up to a referendum on the constitution in October 1992, articulating the relations between ethnic and linguistic identities and '*le peuple québécois*'. I call this broader public discourse structuring in the sense that its terms underpin a complex network of (sometimes contradictory) statements ranging from the pragmatic and public (is Quebec a nation-state) to the affective and personal (am I, are we, fundamentally American or something different; neither traditional nor simply modern or postmodern, something different; *étrange à nous-même*). This structuring discourse functions less as a narration of nation than as what Sherry Simon calls fictions of *l'identitaire*.¹ That is to say that our collective history, however imagined, is less in question than the more personalized problem of identity in difference; *l'identitaire* is a hybrid, unstable figure. What is at stake then is the production of a cosmopolitan community, to be both a people (*le sujet-nation*), and therefore the ground of a state, and, at the same time, to exceed the limits of this national-subjectivity: to not be identical with it.

While it would be relatively normal to view these three developments as co-occurring but discrete social processes and therefore to study them discretely (with the respective tools of political economy and discourse analysis), I take them to be three moments of an internal process. They are connected moments of an arrangement of discursive and nondiscursive relations of power, a *dispositif*, that links the specificity of the sectors of the audiovisual (especially narrative cinema and television) with wider articulations of the relations between economy and society and between the Quebec state and the imagined communities of nation and people. I want to argue that the cultural industries in Quebec are more than a key agency in the production of the national formation. Rather, I will argue that the domains of the cultural have come increasingly to function as discursive 'accumulators' in an emergent regime of social power that conditions public life in the present conjuncture. And, while I believe that many of these traits are specific to the particularities of the situation in Quebec, I believe they have a more general circulation in Europe and North America.²

Part of the specificity of the situation in Quebec derives from the

1 Sherry Simon. Pierre L'Hérault, Robert Schwartzwald and Alexis Nouss. *Fictions de l'identitaire au Québec* (Montreal: XYZ, 1991).

2 For a European francophone perspective on this emergent regime see Gilles Deleuze (interviewed by Toni Negri). *Le devenir révolutionnaire et les créations politiques. Futur antérieur* no 1 (1990) pp. 100-108.

central role played by formations of intellectuals in the revision of public life since the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s. The relations of economy and society have been linked in public discourse and institutional change at least since that time. As a part of that specificity, then, creative artists have functioned as organic intellectuals in relation to the nationalist '*projet de société*'. Film and television directors, writers, critics speak and write in public forums in addition to their creative or critical practice. There are three film magazines in general circulation (*24 images*, *Cinébulles*, and *Séquences*), as well as perhaps another dozen cultural reviews which regularly deal with cinema and television. In addition the association of Quebec cinema and television directors publishes its own review (*Lumières*) which serves to render public the backstage process of cultural production. At the same time it serves as a key platform for the articulation of the creative process and a '*projet de société*'.

Here is a representative example, from the director Jean Pierre Lefebvre's contribution to a recent issue devoted to the *Imaginaire québécois*. Lefebvre links the sentiments of belonging and dependence in the milieu:

. . . two oceans, thousands of lakes, an incomparable river, four striking seasons which annually make us relive the ritual of absolute death and life; a European heritage including the French language; a physical and cultural *métissage* with the nations that occupied the territory before us; a religion-State and a State-religion; and, finally, a history displaced (*détournée*) from its course by British imperialism and now powerfully irrigated by American imperialism (more 'gently' named continental culture) ³

³ Jean Pierre Lefebvre. *Imaginer l'imaginaire Lumières* no. 27 (1991) p. 9 (my translation)

While Lefebvre's particular vision of a pastoral left-nationalism is only one version of this social project of cultural creation, his literal and metaphorical utilization of the term *métissage* is a key trope of the structuring discourse of the *identitaire*. In more general terms the figure of *métissage* works to name the instability of the traits of the *peuple québécois* both and neither European and American; ethnically distinct and of mixed parentage; tied to the (increasingly urban) environment and culturally dependant, a *sujet-nation* linked to the project of sovereignty and/or a community linked through affective alliances of sentiment and a common passage in the quotidian.

For the purposes of my argument here I will appropriate and extend the figure of *métissage* in order to specify the political work of the *dispositif* linking narrative film and television to the global revisions of the relations between economy and society, people and nation. In this sense I take this figure of unstable mixing to describe the virtual system – the particular arrangement of discursive and nondiscursive (narrative and economic) forces – productive of the national formation in the current conjuncture. In key ways the

political economic organization of audiovisual production can be viewed as just such a hybrid accomplishment

Over the last decade the distinction between the cinema and television sectors has tended to dissolve. The same private production and distribution companies (often in a local vertical integration – as with Astral, Cité-Amérique) are responsible for the bulk of narrative cinema and television programmes. The same directors, writers, cinematographers and actors work in both domains quite interchangeably. Indeed, it is quite common to see the same combinations of actors and directors working together in serial projects. Jean Beaudin, the director of *Les filles de Caleb*, cast Roy Dupuis, the male lead in both *Les filles* and *Scoop*, as the central character of his film adaptation of René Daniel Dubois' play *Being at home with Claude* (1991). And, for a few weeks this winter, one could watch Rémy Girard perform as one of the principal characters of *Scoop*, as the lead in the film *L'amoureux fou* (1991), and in a critically acclaimed local production of *En attendant Godot*.

This organizational and occupational hybridity is, I assume, relatively common in small countries. But, in other ways, the sector of audiovisual production is integrated into the peculiar political economic system in Quebec (and Canada) – what one Canadian critic has called a permeable Fordism. In one form or another, the entire sector of cultural production is characterized by structures of coproduction.⁴ More importantly, this system of production almost always involves provincial and federal investment or subvention. Investment in feature films by SOGIC or Téléfilm Canada is normally hinged upon investment and a broadcast licence from a local broadcaster. The francophone sector of the National Film Board is a regular partner with independent feature producers, either through direct investment or in providing technical and facilities resources.

The key characteristic of the system, then, is that it is regulated by a subventiary logic: cultural commodification is intrinsically tied to political cultural goals. Practices of cultural creation are disciplined by a hybrid of market and state-building forces. It is precisely this (at times contradictory) subventiary logic that creates the conflicts between the production community and SOGIC. The number of partners involved in film and television production bureaucratizes the preproduction process. Multiple script drafts, and meetings of production partners, necessarily cause delays; it can take up to two years for projects to get into production, even for producers and directors with a strong track-record. And commissioning editors at SOGIC and Téléfilm are key agents in the process. It is their organizational assumptions about the market and cultural environment which condition the script evaluation and revision process, and which determine the ultimate approval or rejection of project funding.

⁴ While this system of coproduction is primarily internal there are a smaller number of international coproduction arrangements. For an analysis of the outcomes of this form of hybrid production see Chantal Nadeau, 'Americanite ou américanisation? l'exemple de la coproduction au Québec', *Cinéma* nos 1-2 (1992) pp. 60-71.

The production of tele-series has, over the last several years, added major corporate underwriters (*commanditaires*) to the production process. *Les filles de Caleb* was sponsored by a major grocery chain. *Scoop*, a newsroom drama centred in a fictional Montreal daily, *L'Express*, was sponsored by a bakery and the nonfictional daily, *La Presse*. But this development does not represent the uniqueness of the sector of cultural production. Rather, it points to its more complete integration into the dominant structures of the political economy of Quebec. Since the 1960s the particular response within Quebec to the challenge of continental economic integration with the USA has been a form of defensive corporatism. The state, through crown corporations and targeted investment, cooperates with private capital and organized labour in a fairly rigorous system that's been called Québec, Inc.⁵

The underwriting of tele-series by corporate Quebec accomplishes the further reflexive integration of the cultural sector into Québec, Inc. For, while this development further exposes cultural production to the discipline of coproduction it also pulls the commercial speech of the corporations towards the nation-building project of *l'identitaire*. The advertisements produced by Boulangeries Weston for *Scoop* linked their products to versions of the story of Quebec history. Indeed, each episode of the show was framed by a series of introductory comments by company president Gaétan Lussier taped on the newsroom set of the show. The series of comments condensed corporate credit for the show with the articulation of a collective '*nous*' identifying individual viewers with *un peuple québécois*: 'In the name of Weston I want to salute all the actors of the series *Scoop*. They bring us an uncommon pleasure, and emotions which take our breath away. Good evening and good *Scoop*' (my translation).

This extension of the strategy of Québec, Inc. into an explicitly discursive form further integrates corporatism into public life. At the same time, it helps identify the traits of the other (*l'autre cap*) troubling the production of an autonomous Quebecois identity. This other is contained, as an internal contradiction, within Lefebvre's pastoral left-nationalism, both our environment and US imperialism are American. And it is precisely this historical and material paradox of Americanness (*l'américanité*), to be both of the continent and separate from it, that troubles the certainties of figures of the *identitaire*. Figures of *l'américanité* and *l'identitaire* function as antagonistic pairs in the articulation of the productivity and the instabilities of the discursive formations of nation and people.

It has been precisely the question of Americanness that has served as the articulation point between structures of cultural production (Québec, Inc.) and the discursive regularities subtending the social representations contained in recent narrative cinema and television. Indeed, a series of innovative documentaries produced at the

6 For a discussion of the series see Pierre Veronneau, *La Série L'Américanité les paradoxes d'une notion Cinemas* nos 1-2 (1990), pp 87-102

francophone sector of the National Film Board under that title in the late 1980s was the most explicit intervention into the debate.⁶ Of the films in the series, Micheline Lanctôt's *La poursuite du bonheur* (1987) was the one to explore most explicitly the tensions between the affective and political moments of the *identitaire québécois*. The film blends interviews with images of life within the environment of postwar suburban Montreal (bungalows and malls) in an interrogation of the relations between collective identity and the individual pursuit of happiness by American means (fast food, cars, Toys-R-Us). The film ultimately argues that the individual pursuit of happiness through commercial means is a form of life from elsewhere which threatens both the collective structure of feeling of the collectivity and Quebec's political and economic autonomy.

If Lanctôt's film, and the series, represent an explicit engagement with these social relations, these same relations structure the particular discursive apparatus underpinning the social representation in recent audiovisual narrative. The hybrid nature of Quebec's subventionary system of production has led to an interlacing of genres across the film and television sectors. Feature films are coproduced with and for broadcast companies, tele-series and mini-series are prepared in versions for theatrical release. There is, therefore, a complex generic articulation in difference of films *d'auteur* and tele-series. A series of telefilms produced with Radio-Canada and Radio-Québec over the last several years are the ideal mediating form. This articulation involves the mixing of traits of tele-series (the appropriation of what is in the news for narrative ends) with those of films *d'auteur* (the cinema of sentiment and affect). The fact that the same directors and actors work across all forms merely heightens the effect (Michel Brault's *Les noces de papiers* being perhaps the paradigmatic case).

And, as Chantal Nadeau has argued concerning Quebec women's cinema in the 1980s (particularly the films of Léa Pool), the dominant representational mode of this articulation in difference has been intimist in character.⁷ That is to say that social differences and histories are represented within an affective and personalized regime. And, as Elspeth Probyn argues in relation to *Les filles de Caleb*⁸, and Will Straw in relation to *Montréal, ville ouverte* and *Scoop*⁹, narrative tensions around social distinction(s) are resolved in the tele-series within a language of personalized choice (sexed, biological choice in *Les filles*; moral choice in the other series).

Thus, the cultural *métissage* effectuated through recent Quebec cinema and television is both industrial and discursive in nature. Narrative cinema and television do not simply reflect the tensions between the pragmatic and public and the affective and personalized moments of the discourses of *l'identitaire* in Quebec. They are centrally productive of their unstable articulation. In this period of crisis in the constitutional relations between Quebec and the rest of

7 Chantal Nadeau 'Women in French Quebec cinema: the space of socio-sexual (in)difference' *Cineaction* no. 28 (1992) pp 4-15. *Les femmes frappées de disparition*, 24 *Images* nos 56-7 (1991) pp 60-62

8 Unpublished paper presented at the Screen Studies conference 1992

9 Will Straw 'Montreal: confidential notes on an imagined city' *Cineaction* no. 28 (1992) pp 58-65

10 Nathalie Petrowski: L'amour
 toujours l'amour. *Le Devoir*, 13
 juin (1992), p. C 3

Canada the personalized metaphors of marriage and divorce (Quebec is usually sexed as the feminine partner) have become common evaluative figures in commentary and debate. It should come as little surprise, then, that the critic, novelist and filmmaker Nathalie Petrowski, in an article on the production of Johanne Prigent's feature, *Les amoureuses*, would remobilize the metaphor to give this *intimiste* production a constitutional reading.¹⁰

The discursive productivity of *l'identitaire méusée* – the collective Quebecois subject personalized in the pursuit of happiness à *l'américain* – has simply come full circle: *un huis clos*. There is no longer any effective distinction between film culture and the common culture in Quebec. Nor does it make sense any more to analyse the cultural industries in Quebec as separate from the general articulations of public life. Productive discourse in Quebec cinema and television is centrally productive of the tensions within the identities of the national formation. And, if this particular discursive and nondiscursive arrangement of power can be read as a response to something, it must be as a response to a crisis of governmentality. A crisis which is much deeper than this year's constitutional crisis. It is a crisis whose time-line eclipses the boundaries between the modern and the postmodern (and which involves a reworking of a pastoral tradition). Read in this way a critical politics of culture in Quebec begins with an alternative strategy, operating in the future anterior: its aim is to construct a political formation which is no longer indifferent to its crisis of difference, but rather begins with the alterity at the centre of any national identity.

DAVID WILSON

At a time of great public interest in this country in prison privatization and sentencing policy, with a Royal Commission investigating the Criminal Justice Process, and in the USA a continuing debate about capital punishment, it is worthwhile to remind ourselves that crime, especially gruesome violent crime, has a long tradition in the media. In particular, murder, kidnap, heterosexual rape, arson, incest, armed robbery – or some such combination – are the central plot devices of much of the current offerings of Hollywood, with *Basic Instinct* (1992) and *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991) only the two most successful, and notorious. The fact that you are a thousand times more likely to be murdered by your partner than by a serial killing psychiatrist, or by a psychotic lesbian, matters little to filmmakers who seem to both understand and shape the fears of their audience. Indeed, almost replicating the Criminal Justice Process itself, film moves effortlessly from the motivation, planning, and commission of an offence (as in *Cape Fear* [1991]), policing, and the arrest of a suspect (see *The Hard Way* [1991]), through the trial process (as in *My Cousin Vinny* [1992]), to investigations of injustice, after the dust has settled (for example, *Let Him Have It* [1991]). This media influence undoubtedly impacts on the popular understanding of the law, policing, and the ‘closed institution’ of prison, often making it hard to separate myth from reality.

Prison is for many people, especially in the UK and in the USA, the end product of the Criminal Justice Process. The UK, for example, sends more people per capita to prison than any other member state of the Council of Europe. The latest available comparative figures for the prison population of member states of

the Council of Europe are for 1 September 1989. On that date the UK had the highest prison population, at 55,047, in absolute numbers, and relative to its overall population. Thus, on the basis of numbers of prisoners per 100,000 of the population, the UK recorded 96.5, whilst for example West Germany was 83.8, Turkey 83.5, Spain 80.0, France 76.0, and Italy 54.0.¹ And the USA uses imprisonment more often than any other country in the world, with the exception of South Africa, for which prison statistics are kept.² Not unnaturally one would have expected the prison to have become a common focus for the filmmaker. Yet, with the exception of *Porridge* (1974–7), and *Underbelly* (1991) on the BBC, and films such as *Scum* (1979), *Scrubbers* (1982), *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* (1962), *A Sense of Freedom* (1981), and *Silent Screams* (1991) – the latter two films both concerned with the Barlinnie Special Unit in Glasgow³ – there has been little interest in British prison movies, especially in comparison to the popularity of police, court, and legal dramas.⁴ Why this should be so is beyond the scope of this paper, but it is interesting to note the different historical use of prison in film in the USA, where as long ago as the 1930s over sixty films were made which used imprisonment and its consequences as their primary themes.⁵

This historical tradition has allowed contemporary American filmmakers not only to set their action within prisons, but also to build upon a series of clichés, and plot devices with which the audience has become familiar. Thus, for example, in Robert Altman's *The Player* (1992), the film within the film climaxes with a grotesque gas chamber rescue of Julia Roberts, playing a middle-class woman convicted of murdering her husband, by Bruce Willis, playing a reforming District Attorney, which not only allows both actors to parody their respective onscreen personas, but is also a dramatic allusion to countless other execution scenes from US movies. (Sadly, of course, this 'happy ending' is far from reality: the USA, almost alone amongst democratic nations, has returned to mass executions of prisoners, the overwhelming majority of whom are poor, male, and black. In a country where 12 per cent of the population is black, over 40 per cent of those on Death Row are members of ethnic minorities. Similarly, of all those on Death Row, 43 are white people having been sentenced to death for killing a black person, whereas 727 black people have been sentenced to death for killing a white person. Indeed, no white person, convicted of the single murder of a black person has ever gone to the gas chamber.⁶) Nonetheless, the scene works as we are caught up in the drama that is unfolding, conscious of the images, and clichés that Altman builds into the action: the brave heroine, sniffing the first traces of gas, straining in the execution chair, the priest offering last rites, darkened passageways, filled with warders, on-lookers, outside the chamber, witnessing the heroine's final moments, and so forth.

- 1 Figures taken from NACRO Briefing no 25 (1991).
- 2 See Andrew Rutherford *Prisons and the Process of Justice: The Reductionist Challenge* (London: Heinemann 1984) pp. 49–51. In 1980, for example, using the same statistical calculation per 100,000 of the population, the number imprisoned was 207.
- 3 The Barlinnie Special Unit came to prominence with the publication of Jimmy Boyle's autobiography *A Sense of Freedom* (London: Pan Books 1977) whilst he was still a prisoner in the Unit. Coincidentally, in the film of the book Boyle was played by David Hayman, who went on to play the disgraced and jailed tycoon in *Underbelly* and directed *Silent Screams*, and Boyle himself is now married to the daughter of the former Chairman of the British Board of Film Censors.
- 4 See especially Mike Nellis 'British prison movies: the case of *Now Barabbas*', *The Howard Journal* vol. 27 no. 1 (1988) pp. 2–31.
- 5 *Ibid.* p. 3.

- 6 See Marilyn Thomas *Life on Death Row: One Man's Fight against Racism and the Death Penalty* (London: Piatkus 1989) which describes the work of Clive Stafford Smith, an English lawyer working for the Southern Prisoners Defence Committee.

Recent contemporary films have used different images or clichés associated with prison for similar affect. Tom Sellick, for example, ended up inside in *An Innocent Man* (1989), and the prison was used as a background against which he was able to reaffirm his masculinity in the narrative of the story, by challenging the black gang leader who threatened his life whilst in jail. Similarly Sylvester Stallone, like Sellick, played an innocent man wrongly convicted in *Lock-Up* (1989), and had to overcome the ludicrously evil prison warden, played by Donald Sutherland, before being able to gain his freedom. Both films not only emphasized the brutality of prison, but also the collusion of prison staff in creating and perpetuating that brutality. This was again one of the main themes of Jean-Claude Van Damme's *Death Warrant* (1990), a film in which the prison staff were actively engaged in killing prisoners so that they could sell their vital organs for medical transplants. Other themes common to all three films include the cultural stereotyping of almost every black prisoner as violent, or corrupt – in marked contrast to the 'innocence' of the lead characters; homoeroticism, with the main protagonist usually being threatened with being buggered, and several minor characters who are sexually assaulted; and, finally, almost endless violence.⁷ All this is hardly likely to encourage the public to have confidence in the prison authorities to deal properly or humanely with its charges. Rather than being viewed as a legitimate branch of the public administration of justice, the public could be forgiven for viewing prison as rotten, corrupt, and alien.

Against this background *Alien 3* (1992) concludes its trilogy in Fiorina 161 – later shortened to 'Fury 161' – a penal work colony inhabited by various categories of sex offenders, into whose company Sigourney Weaver crash-lands. This prison planet is the logical extension of the ideas of transportation and privatization, and in look resembles a Piranesi drawing. There are numerous echoes of penal history. Ripley frightens the prison doctor into conducting an autopsy on the basis that Newt may be carrying cholera, a direct reference to the old 'gaol fever'⁸, and the Victorian triumvirate of prison – governor, doctor, and chaplain – reestablishes itself in the film, albeit that the chaplain is merely expressed through the prisoners themselves, who have all become 'Born Again' Christians. Similarly, a range of familiar prison clichés are adopted: the inmates – all sex offenders – are initially presented as mutinous and violent, the one prison guard is known as '87', a disparaging reference to his IQ; and there is an attempted rape of Sigourney Weaver. Material comforts on Fury 161 are few, and there is an air of neglect and abandonment. On Fury 161 they have, it would seem, 'locked them up, and thrown away the key'.⁹

However, the film also uses its prison vehicle in new and important ways, not least of which is the eventual heroism, and self-sacrifice of the prisoners themselves. Their redemption is in marked

⁷ I have reviewed *Death Warrant* in *The Prison Service Journal* no. 87 (1992) p. 77. It is interesting to note that *The Prison Service Journal* has for the past two years carried a regular film review section which reviews any film that has prison or the consequences of imprisonment as its main theme.

⁸ Gaol Fever was prevalent in prisons until the end of the eighteenth century and was almost certainly typhus. It was difficult to keep the fever within the prison walls and thus it caused a similar terror to an outbreak of plague. This led the authorities to produce in 1774 an Act for Preserving the Health of Prisoners in Gaol and Preventing the Gaol Distemper. This Act also led to the first public appointments of doctors to prisons. For further information see Richard Smith *Prison Health Care* (Torquay: The Devonshire Press, 1984).

⁹ Interestingly, the Prison Service has recently embarked upon a far reaching sex offender treatment programme. See *Beyond a Containment: The Penal Response to the Treatment of Sex Offenders* (London: Prison Reform Trust, 1992).

10 HMP Grendon is the only prison in Britain which gives formal authority to its prisoners. The prison operates as a therapeutic community and prisoners vote on virtually every aspect of the prison's working life. I have written about Grendon in HMP Grendon: a maverick prison. *The Journal of Forensic Psychiatry*, vol. 2 no. 2 (1991) pp. 179–184

contrast to how film normally views prisoners, and this is certainly to *Alien 3*'s credit. Indeed, the prisoners' growing and positive role in the film is stimulated by the deaths of the Governor, and doctor – representatives of formal authority on Fury 161 – and whilst it is impossible to sustain any developed analysis of this anarchic theme, as the prisoners get eaten too quickly, it is worth remembering that when film has empowered prisoners in the past, as in *Escape from New York* (1981), it has done so merely to show what wanton violence results.¹⁰ That *Alien 3* empowers sex offenders, notorious media 'bogeymen', with positive results, is even more challenging.

A great deal has already been written about *Alien 3*, most of which has been negative, and usually richly deserved. The plot is remorseless in reaching its obvious conclusion; characters are rarely developed, which makes it hard to care for them when they are eventually eaten; and as we all know by now – unless you really have been stuck in space – what the Alien looks like, it is hard to be surprised by it, or even scared. Sadly, it also fails to deal with its own internal conclusions, other than in a clichéd manner. Thus, for example, Sigourney Weaver's eventual death, plunging into a fire-filled cauldron can be seen in almost exactly the same fashion as we see the intentionally clichéd gas chamber scene in *The Player*, with only the outcome different. That there is no Bruce Willis on hand to catch her – just in the nick of time – is probably to the film's credit, but perhaps had more to do with Sigourney Weaver's stated intention of not acting in an *Alien 4*, than any intrinsic artistic purity. Personally, I would like to have known more about Fury 161, and the inmates inside, to discover if life on a prison planet is any kinder than life in prisons on Earth.

Prisons are normally a hidden fact of public life – except when there is a riot – and prisoners are not normally viewed in anything other than disparaging terms. It would be nice to think that film, which owes so much to crime and criminals, might build on some of the positive images of inmates in *Alien 3*, and raise the current level of debate above the perennial demands for the reintroduction of capital punishment, and the ever increasing calls for even greater numbers to be sent inside. Of course the reality is that too many people have too much invested either to deal with the realities of the status quo, or to challenge the media myths about prisons or prisoners.

reports

BFI Melodrama Conference, London 6-10 July 1992

Participants from sixteen countries and at least twelve academic disciplines converged this summer at the British Film Institute's first international conference on Melodrama. The interdisciplinary nature of the meeting was highlighted in the pre-conference literature, and many arrived excited at the prospect of fruitful cross-fertilization and debate. If these delegates left disappointed, it was probably more to do with the distinctiveness of particular methods and discourses than with, as some suggested, the structure of the conference.

This said, some participants did arrive with wider horizons, or at least bigger questions to ask, than others. Differing expectations, indeed, were perhaps indicative of the more or less exigent place the concept of melodrama occupies within disciplines or the ongoing work of particular delegates.

As well as melodrama, *historicize* was a word given a lot of airspace at the conference. And, without wishing to invoke an antagonism which was not evident, whilst for some this appeared to mean an accurate location of a perhaps too coherent nineteenth-century paradigm, for others it constituted an attempt to give a richer meaning to contemporary cultural practices. How to pursue this latter desire, it was acknowledged, was not unproblematic. Those connections made were mainly tentative not concrete, and in some senses this was a relief.

Perhaps the most intriguing question asked was why it should be now, 1992, that melodrama is prominent enough on such a diversity of academic agendas to merit a conference like this. At the plenaries and at the papers I attended, this issue was, disappointingly, never fully addressed.

Important to mention is the range of events that the conference's organizers planned and provided for participants. Attendance at only a selection of the archive and video screenings, variously aimed informal forums, acting workshops, numerous papers, and the hugely enjoyable Victorian Nights at the National Film Theatre, would have enlightened any participant as to the multiplicity of melodrama's meanings and manifestations. No doubt, as at any conference with such a broad theme, some delegates, through choice, visited only one of melodrama's sites of meaning. Significantly, it would have been easier to do this and take part in a number of events if one's interest had lain in, for example, early twentieth-century film rather than in, say, music or television.

With regard to television (which was my own frame for the conference), this probably has a lot to do with the difficulty of containing any contemporary medium or genre within rigid boundaries: whilst during some (especially early film and theatre) papers it was clear I was at a melodrama conference, others' melodramatic connection was decidedly creative – and all the more interesting for it. Indeed, how melodrama currently figures across media as an aesthetic practice and (postmodern?) sensibility was an area sadly unexplored. I was glad but not surprised to find papers on television soap opera. I had hoped, though, that there might have been more like the fascinating presentation on Granada's multi-layered melodrama fiction, *Thatcher: The Final Days* (1991), given at the recent Screen Studies Conference. This is a personal gripe, and, regarding the scope of papers, organizers obviously have little control of what is offered to them.

This point was made by Christine Gledhill in response to the suggestion that the conference had favoured, in content and focus, Europe and the West. She did agree, though, that the dominance of the western

legacy in studies of melodrama was an issue that the conference might have more fully addressed. This was one of several issues that could have been raised at any media and cultural studies conference. Gender, of course, was a critical theme throughout, and in some cases more usefully held papers together than did melodrama.

Less centrally, but just as current, was the concern voiced by a number of delegates about the relationship between critics and readers/consumers; and attendant to this (if more persevering in its complexity) the relationship between theory and practice. Though revision was a common desire, 'Where now?' seemed to be the stage at which many had arrived.

Linked to this, with melodrama as a compass, some papers embarked on a potentially treacherous voyage towards redefining history. Occasionally in opposition to named critics, sometimes against more imaginary others, there was a marked tendency to read back for heterogeneity – in melodrama's forms, and in audiences' constitution and responses. When evidently rigorously researched, such arguments were fascinating and seductive. The question asked here – how feasibly can major theorists' ideas be applied across time, cultures, and particularly practices and media? – is one we must continue to address. Sometimes, though, insistent searches for specificity were perhaps more indicative of the dangers of using today's critical lens when looking back, and of an apparent gap between some academics/disciplines and others. The point I think, which applies to both historical and contemporary research, and which was raised in a number of the conference's settings, is that whilst theory should continue to be informed by empirical work, using the latter solely as a tool with which to chip away at the foundations of the former is a thoroughly, and epistemologically, misguided project.

What it meant to be critical was a

conference subtext, and when discussed (mostly at the margins) seemed to be an especially apposite question for melodrama. How do we theorize surface, style, tone? No one had a conclusive answer to that question. Neither, though, was much space created to investigate it. This touches on the functions of conferences. This one, being led largely by the presentation of papers and the exhibition of historical texts, was perhaps more about information than questions – and none the less valuable because of that. Some of the issues raised might have been given more troubling mileage at Leicester's workshop-oriented summer school later in July.

How speakers present their papers can of course facilitate discussion. The best presenters reminded us that their papers were (thanks to the BFI) quickly and cheaply available, and moved away from their written structure, contextualizing them instead with the development of their theories, and with applicable video extracts. Some papers, though interesting and provocative in print, failed to engage their audience – musical underscoring and an excessive *mise-en-scène* might have helped.

Reinvoking concerns which I hope have not been wholly consigned to a previous era, one participant felt it was crucial that academics should ask themselves how they wanted to relate in their work to production. Critical practice, she reminded us, had multiple articulations, and did not stop at analysis. Indeed, some of the most interesting but symptomatically tangential comments made at the conference were by those participants currently engaged in some form of melodramatic production.

Melodrama frequently had difficulties fulfilling its designated role as a combining theme. This was as it should be. In the struggle between historical and theoretical definitions of melodrama the most useful arguments were those that forwarded critical practice generally. This does not mean that descriptive examples given were not always

important and interesting, rather than these seemed more important when given some kind of critical framework. And some speakers made somewhat forced links between media. The need to identify meaningful commonalities and relationships, not superficial resemblances, between what are after all different sign systems, was a point repeatedly made. Specialism need not deny eclecticism, it was felt, and the various levels on which melodrama operates mean that collaboration is a more desirable aim than interdisciplinarity.

Michael Stewart

Screen Studies Conference, Glasgow, 26-28 June 1992

In his conference welcome, John Caughie claimed he had forgotten the reason why the work of the Frankfurt School had been chosen as the subject of this year's conference. Simon Frith was not sure that there had been one. Following the first of two plenary sessions however, it became clear that there were indeed motives and methods at work. The strongest of these appeared to be exploration of methodological links between film, social and cultural theory and the testing of their relevance or usefulness for each other, particularly in relation to questions of aesthetics and the politics of 'cultural value'. The traces of these contingencies were legible, to varying degrees, in many subsequent papers. Four panel sessions (comprising 34 papers in all) were each divided up under headings such as 'actuality', 'fiction', 'desire' and 'truth/illusion', reflecting at least an intention to address and question certain key political and aesthetic concerns within the Frankfurt School, though interestingly, 'desire' and 'fiction' emerged as the most persistent categories in these sessions.

Gertrude Koch demonstrated how

Adorno's application of the concept of *Bilderverbot* (the ban on graven images derived from prehistorical taboos and repeated in the Talmud and Zohar) works to regulate its apparently opposite term in image theory, mimesis. For him the *Bilderverbot*'s acknowledgement of the autonomy of the aesthetic, the separation of signifier and signified, paves the way for the radical and secularized version of this in modernist aesthetics, where the image is held to be the negation of all that exists. By describing individual film images and montage as a kind of writing he both saves film from being regarded as purely mimetic and suggests links between the *Bilderverbot* and politically radical filmmakers from Eisenstein to sections of the feminist avant-garde who have all recognized a negational potential in the film image and therefore a potential to disrupt and contest narrative cinemas determined by the fetish character of patriarchal culture.

It was precisely Adorno's theory of negation and his investment in the autonomy of the aesthetic which came under fire in Georgina Born's very challenging and wide-ranging paper. She claimed that Adorno's theory of critical negation masks an imbalance. His writing on popular music may remain his most important contribution to contemporary cultural theory yet it is only by exempting art music from the same degree of economic and sociological scrutiny that he can establish its autonomous and negational potential. This idealization of art music can be understood in the context of modernism but Born demonstrated how several critics get into deep water when attempting to apply his theory of negation in critiques of contemporary culture without acknowledging either its historicism or the fact that certain avant-garde aesthetics can themselves solidify into a 'tradition'.

This critique was accompanied by an outline for a more comprehensive account of negation including a genre analysis of the

important and interesting, rather that these seemed more important when given some kind of critical framework. And some speakers made somewhat forced links between media. The need to identify meaningful commonalities and relationships, not superficial resemblances, between what are after all different sign systems, was a point repeatedly made. Specialism need not deny eclecticism, it was felt, and the various levels on which melodrama operates mean that collaboration is a more desirable aim than interdisciplinarity.

Michael Stewart

Screen Studies Conference, Glasgow, 26-28 June 1992

In his conference welcome, John Caughie claimed he had forgotten the reason why the work of the Frankfurt School had been chosen as the subject of this year's conference. Simon Frith was not sure that there had been one. Following the first of two plenary sessions however, it became clear that there were indeed motives and methods at work. The strongest of these appeared to be exploration of methodological links between film, social and cultural theory and the testing of their relevance or usefulness for each other, particularly in relation to questions of aesthetics and the politics of 'cultural value'. The traces of these contingencies were legible, to varying degrees, in many subsequent papers. Four panel sessions (comprising 34 papers in all) were each divided up under headings such as 'actuality', 'fiction', 'desire' and 'truth/illusion', reflecting at least an intention to address and question certain key political and aesthetic concerns within the Frankfurt School, though interestingly, 'desire' and 'fiction' emerged as the most persistent categories in these sessions.

Gertrude Koch demonstrated how

Adorno's application of the concept of *Bilderverbot* (the ban on graven images derived from prehistorical taboos and repeated in the Talmud and Zohar) works to regulate its apparently opposite term in image theory, mimesis. For him the *Bilderverbot*'s acknowledgement of the autonomy of the aesthetic, the separation of signifier and signified, paves the way for the radical and secularized version of this in modernist aesthetics, where the image is held to be the negation of all that exists. By describing individual film images and montage as a kind of writing he both saves film from being regarded as purely mimetic and suggests links between the *Bilderverbot* and politically radical filmmakers from Eisenstein to sections of the feminist avant garde who have all recognized a negational potential in the film image and therefore a potential to disrupt and contest narrative cinemas determined by the fetish character of patriarchal culture.

It was precisely Adorno's theory of negation and his investment in the autonomy of the aesthetic which came under fire in Georgina Born's very challenging and wide-ranging paper. She claimed that Adorno's theory of critical negation masks an imbalance. His writing on popular music may remain his most important contribution to contemporary cultural theory yet it is only by exempting art music from the same degree of economic and sociological scrutiny that he can establish its autonomous and negational potential. This idealization of art music can be understood in the context of modernism but Born demonstrated how several critics get into deep water when attempting to apply his theory of negation in critiques of contemporary culture without acknowledging either its historicism or the fact that certain avant-garde aesthetics can themselves solidify into a 'tradition'.

This critique was accompanied by an outline for a more comprehensive account of negation including a genre analysis of the

avant garde which would be capable of describing not only its aesthetic but its social and economic structures. However, the need for an understanding of the specificity of the 'aesthetic' was also stressed, something which cannot always be boiled down to unproblematic political motivations. This was to be combined with more sophisticated models for describing both agency in cultural production and the way texts then circulate in their 'imagined communities'. Finally, Born claimed that in terms of real strategies in mainstream production it is possible to facilitate positive self-identifications through difference, alterity and marginality as well as through appeals to universality, thereby proving that high art does not have a monopoly on critical opposition nor is negation ever uncomplicated.

John Caughie, with whose article on Adorno (in *Screen*, vol. 32, no. 3) Born had partly taken issue with, welcomed her contribution to the development of television theory beyond simply issues of audience address. He reiterated the pressing need for work which did not simply serve up a televisual canon and catalogue its 'repertory of techniques', but which could describe and account for the specificity of television aesthetics. Sylvia Harvey, however, was concerned that debates on negation frequently exemplify a failure in cultural studies to engage fully with and connect to issues of political leadership, specifically in relation to broadcasting institutions, something she felt necessary if real change were to be accomplished.

Thomas Levin also dealt with Adorno's music writing (reprinted in *October*, 1990). His return to this work however was informed by more redemptive motivations than Born's as it proved to be the basis of a claim that Adorno's view of the reproductive potential of both phonographic and cinematic technology was, after all, a positive one. Levin's argument hinged on Adorno's establishment of both medium's status as

forms of written inscription. The important difference between them, though, is that whereas the cinematic inscription is iconical, musical inscriptions, like hieroglyphic signs, at once suggest universal intelligibility, in that the grooves of each record house the indexical traces of the musical event it will reproduce, while of course these signs themselves ultimately remain enigmatic and illegible. The modality of phonographic inscriptions therefore provides a register for utopian, universalist fantasies of technology as well as nihilistic, apocalyptic ones.

Adorno's projected programme for montage in recording practice emerged as similar to his cinematic one, outlined also by Koch. Nonetheless his relief that records would mean that opera could now be appreciated as a 'pure' musical text did hint at a somewhat po-faced failure to appreciate its shamelessly excessive theatricality and appeared to be a symptom of an implicit purism and puritanism in relation to high cultural values. Though questioners did not challenge this, they did draw attention to the erasability of the musical trace; the fact that it no longer reveals how it constructs reality. A final stalemate was reached when Simon Frith contested Levin's definition of indexicality which he claimed wrongly assumed a transparent relationship between physical recording and musical event and therefore disguised the necessity of musical literacy.

Again, Miriam Hansen's paper on Benjamin's writing on Disney was a rereading more than a reapplication of Frankfurt School work, though hers was one of only two papers to deal substantially with Benjamin. Whereas Adorno could only see the sanctioning of collective barbarism and sadism in Disney, Benjamin's project was to examine the therapeutic and cathartic function of its texts, that is, that their comedy facilitates the premature 'detonation' and diffusion of violent feelings thus preventing their actualization. His

ambivalence however lies in the fact that industrial society generates film technology in which barriers between conscious and unconscious states are broken, yet the individual states of mind dramatized as collective perceptions within this may in fact be examples of psychoses, hallucinations and catastrophes. Far from liberating, these are symptoms of the experience of industrial modernity itself. Hansen argued that though the real emergence of fascism changed the status of Benjamin's argument, his ambivalence around the politics of collective laughter still relates to current video technologies which construct play versions of secondary worlds only to naturalize violent oppression, and therefore demonstrates that there remains a need for a politicized aesthetics of technology.

The shared technologies of video entertainment and military warfare and the concomitant confusion of fantasy and actuality potentially produced from this was chillingly illustrated in Brent MacGregor's paper on television Gulf War footage. The air pilot's screens, which exactly resembled a video game, were watched by television viewers and simultaneously became mediators of the 'smart' bomb's sophistication yet preserved viewers from the game's real and messy consequences. He also showed how certain collective memories of important scenes in the war such as the first night of 'Desert Storm' bombing in Bagdad were based on news events which never actually occurred but which were assembled as 'preferred readings' from different sources after the event.

The question of what actually constitutes televisual truth was taken up by Andrew Barry who radically challenged the terms of current theoretical debates which, he argued, get bogged down in ideology critiques at the cost of ignoring the key 'productive effects' of television news, documentary and even drama, the most important of which is their capacity to inform. He stressed the need for

a different understanding of the relationship between realism and the subject as well as a deeper questioning of the 'intended effects', not just of particular texts but of the strategies through which various broadcasting apparatuses attempt to construct subjects.

Perhaps not surprisingly, questions of gender and sexual politics were rather on the margins of this year's conference. Ava Rose and James Friedman's joint presentation however, argued that American television sports spectators are interpellated as both masculine and as distracted by programmes which are structured as cyclical, melodramatic, open-ended and therefore privilege intuition over analysis. Their aim was to overturn television theory's tendency to feminize mass consumption and to show how the cultivation of such states of distraction serve to reify the skills required of the postindustrial, managerial male worker.

Finally, Jonathan Bignell looked at the way the 'faction', *Thatcher: The Final Days* (1991), mobilized so many different television genres and levels of knowledge that the issue of its 'intended effects', in Barry's terms, or indeed of the capacity of its melodramatic excess to be read in terms of parodic negation or resistant deconstruction, was a confusing and complex one. Bignell asked questions about the generic instabilities of melodrama as well as of its pervasion of televisual narrations of political events and figures. Like film stars, politicians were shown to have been so deeply fetishized through clothes, voices and hairstyles that the programme could rely on John Major's Vyella pyjamas being read instantly as a metonym for the safe and softened stay-at-home ideology he would come to promote. Perhaps the laughter provoked by the spectacle of Thatcher's downfall was cathartic, perhaps gleefully sadistic, but it was certainly welcome.

Helen Stoddart

reviews

review:

Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other: Writing, Postcoloniality and Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989, 173pp.

KAREN ALEXANDER

Most readers will come to Trinh Minh-ha through a familiarity with her film work, especially *Reassemblage* (1983) and *Surname Viet Given Name Nam* (1989). To works that are commonly thought 'difficult' for their discursivity *Woman, Native, Other* is an invaluable accompaniment, especially in a pedagogical context (the context within which, I would guess, the texts here were originally developed). This is not to say that Trinh's writing makes the films less 'difficult' – it is just that, being difficult in its own way, it usefully relativizes 'difficulty' as a critical term.

Building on the gains of anthologies like *Sturdy Black Bridges*, *This Bridge Called My Back* and *But Some Of Us Are Brave*¹, *Woman, Native, Other* is an addition to the all too short list of books that inscribe some sense of race into identity politics, especially around questions of feminism. Although its principal challenge is to patriarchal forms, the challenge to hegemonic white feminism is equally forcefully put by this 'woman of color who writes' (p. 6). In the quest for a voice to question who is allowed to write, traditional feminist heroines like Virginia Woolf are shown to be wanting.

The simplest and best thing about this book is its title. It lays out the author's agenda clearly, but it remains intriguing: how will she articulate her three different themes? Or does she mean, perhaps, that they are different names for the same thing, as is implied by the author's montage of three photographs on the cover? Ambiguously, each of the three women, each with her different gaze, is equally, if

¹ Roseann P. Bell and Beverley Giv Sheftall (eds), *Sturdy Black Bridges: Visions of Black Women in Literature* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1979); Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (eds), *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (New York: Kitchen Table Press, 1984); A. Hull (ed.), *But Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies* (New York: Feminist Press, 1986).

each differently, *Woman, Native, and Other*. Such ambiguity and overlapping are effective ways of raising questions at the beginning of a book, but, it has to be said, they become irritating when they dominate the book all the way to its end. This is not, however, a book to be read from beginning to end. It has four main chapters, but these are divided into thirty-eight separately headed subsections, each of which could be removed from its context and treated as a mini-essay. This might make the book handy for pedagogues. For the discursive reader, however, the constant changes in direction could make it seem confused and unstructured.

There is some overall pattern to the book. The first three chapters emphasize in some way or other each of the three terms of its title. 'Commitment from the mirror-writing box' approaches the question of woman through writing, concluding that 'writing woman cannot address the question of difference and change without reflecting and working on language'. Chapter Two, 'The language of nativism. anthropology as a scientific conversation of man and man', takes up the construction of the 'Native' in the discourse of 'The Great Master' (by whom she means, in the first place, the master-anthropologist Malinowski, and, by extension, all 'masters'). The third chapter, on 'Difference', represents the Other as colonized by white western masters *and* mistresses. These three chapters are framed by a prologue that tells us that 'The Story began long ago' and a concluding chapter called 'Grandma's story' that 'tells a theory' about storytelling and truth. Knowledge passed down by mothers to daughters, storytelling from generation to generation, is 'the simplest vehicle of truth'. *Woman, Native, Other*, though it inscribes itself in that lineage, cannot be said to be so 'simple' a vehicle of truth.

Trinh metaphorizes her discourse as 'chain' (p. 122) or 'thread', though her text is much more like a woven pattern, threads going in different directions at once. This is itself a challenge to patriarchy, rejecting its linearity through a montage of discourses and quotations. She weaves a poetic sense out of dry theories, setting quotations off against each other, and against her own thoughts, though it is not always easy to say where her own thoughts end and quotations begin. This writing style is closely related to Trinh's approach to film, but there are key differences. In the films, image, text, and sound work together or against each other, but there is always space left open for the spectator's reflections to be involved, allowing a critical distance. Such 'polylogism' in her writing excludes the reader, looking more like a means of displaying the author's own, obviously wide, reading. The display is impressive, but the end result is a more closed text than Trinh can have intended.

In this respect, the 'Selected bibliography' is bizarrely inclusive, referencing many works that play no part in the montage of quotations and acting more like a list of 'books I have enjoyed'.

Omitting names like Foucault or Lyotard might not have damaged her arguments, but it is disappointing to see her list works by Mariama Ba or Ntozake Shange and not engage critically with them – especially as the back cover boasts that this ‘is one of the very few theoretical attempts to grapple with the writings of women of color’. (I would reject, incidentally, the suggestion here that the ‘writings of women of color’ are somehow not theoretical, and only become so when a theorist decides to ‘grapple’ with them.) Most glaringly, Trinh includes four texts by bell hooks in her bibliography, but shows no sign of having taken them on board in her writing. This is especially damaging for a book that claims to be ‘the first full length study of Post-Feminism’.

Despite these reservations, *Woman, Native, Other* remains a welcome addition to the work of other black women theorists who have repeatedly questioned institutional notions of gender and difference. In the chapter headed ‘Difference “A Special Third World Women Issue”’, the continuing inadequate attempts to exclude black women by selective inclusion are powerfully evoked. The subsection on ‘“Woman” and the subtle power of linguistic exclusion’ is just the kind of mini-essay that should be circulated at feminist gatherings today. It is in this chapter that Trinh is most explicit about her personal situation, and where in consequence she makes a specifically political case, outlining how her inclusion as a Third World woman into the academic establishment can contribute to her conception of herself as different from other Asian women. Quoting Zora Neal Hurston’s ‘The “pet” negro system’ and citing ideas about separate development from several different contexts, Trinh critiques the idea of establishment-tolerated difference, of ‘not stepping over the line’.

For Trinh Minh-ha, identity and the inscription of difference are always up for grabs. Her antiessentialism determines the form and style of her writing, and if it is in places a cause of confusion, it is also a necessary corrective to the reductionism of the discourses she critiques.

review:

Richard Dyer, *Now You See It: Studies on Lesbian and Gay Film*. London and New York: Routledge, 1991, 328pp.

Bad Object Choices, *How Do I Look: Queer Film and Video*. Seattle, WA: Bay Press, 1991, 295pp.

ALAN McKEE

'How do I look?'; 'Now you see it' a question and an invitation, linked by similar concerns about the conditions of visibility: the first the ironic confidence in surface that comes from 'gender fuck' about to perform; the second an invitation to look at what is normally hidden, whose enunciation implies a cheeky control over visibility on the part of those normally disenfranchised by a gaze that is not their own. The subtitle 'Queer film and video' says even more about the concerns of these books: for 'queer' is 'intrinsically transgressive sexuality which will always be in conflict with the status quo'.¹ As a descendant of gay and lesbian film and politics, 'queer' has changed not only its name but its nature. While the former sought to be 'tasteful and tolerated', the latter is 'irreverent and shameless'.²

In queer politics, as in its forerunner lesbian and gay politics, and much as it was for an emerging feminist movement, film theory has become very important. Film has been stressed 'partly from the desire for high public visibility, and partly as a consequence of identifying mass media film as a central aspect of lesbian/gay oppression' (*Now You See It*, p. 215). As such, both books represent active and considered political interventions. *Now You See It* as an important part of a historiographical movement in lesbian and gay studies which attempts to recover a lost past³; *How Do I Look* as a more specifically theoretical intervention in academic

¹ Constantine Giannans 'The new queer cinema' *Sight and Sound* September 1992 p. 35

² Cherry Smith *ibid.* p. 39

³ See for example Martin Bauml Duberman Martha Vicinus and George Chauncey Jr (eds) *Hidden From History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past* (Harmondsworth Penguin 1991)

debates around the production and consumption of gay film, and film by gays

The historical approach of Richard Dyer is that of a social constructionism which interrogates the ways in which films have helped to 'define the contours of [sexual] identity'; and thus his book – on 'lesbian and gay film' – is addressing the same issues of identity that inform the theoretical discussions of *Bad Object Choices*. For queer politics is, explicitly, no longer the identity politics of 1970s North American affirmation films, where a transcendent and essential 'gay identity' stabilized homosexual subjects. Indeed, the basic ambivalence of the very idea of 'identity' is being investigated. On the one hand,

[It] can be seen as a crude tactic of power, designed to obscure . . . real human diversity. . . . But at the same time, it is about affinities based on selection, self-actualization and choice.⁴

⁴ Jeffrey Weeks *Sexuality and its Discontents* (London: Routledge 1985) pp 187–8

Identity is necessary as the point where the personal intersects with the social, and from this comes the idea of community, facilitated by public spaces such as gay bars, and promoting social interaction and political possibility. But queer politics has come with the realization that, to quote Derek Jarman, 'there never was a community, in fact'.⁵ As Iris Marion Young writes in the context of a feminist ideal of community 'It was an understandable dream . . . understandable, but basically problematic . . . because those motivated by it will tend to suppress differences among themselves. The vision of small, face to face, decentralized units that this ideal promotes, moreover, is an unrealistic vision for transformative politics in a mass urban society'.⁶ Jarman's realization was that the gay scene was not the same thing as gay activism, which was in turn not the same thing as gay 'community'.

⁵ Derek Jarman *The new queer cinema* p 34

⁶ Iris Marion Young *The ideal of community and the politics of difference* in Linda J. Nicholson (ed.) *Feminism/Postmodernism* (London: Routledge 1990) p 300

And so the notion of stable identity, of a 'community' which it sustained, is no longer available to 'queer' politics (much to the relief, surely, of those of us who have never recognized ourselves in the homosexualities available to us). What queer theory offers in its place is a politics of difference. Already, though, this is demanding theorization. For various standard differences have already been overrehearsed in queer politics: the recognition that previous politics have effaced difference leads to what Kobena Mercer perceptively calls 'the mantra of "race, class, gender"' (and all the other intervening variables) – which does not, though, deal with 'the complexity of what actually happens "between" the contingent spaces where each variable intersects with the others' (*How Do I Look*, p. 193). The way out of this is to move away from static and simplistic concepts of identity to 'recognize different kinds of identifications that we are capable of as social actors' (p. 215).

But identity cannot be so easily abandoned. As Stuart Marshall notes, 'identity politics suppressed difference and subjectivity

precisely to ensure political solidarity and action' (*How Do I Look*, p. 85). To reject the concept entirely would be to make collective action difficult: it is in this area that some interesting hybrid approaches have been formulated. In a feminist context, Gayatri Spivak has spoken of an 'operational essentialism' – 'a false ontology of women as a universal in order to advance a feminist political programme', and this idea is echoed through much of the work in both the books under review – accepting what is known to be untrue in order to facilitate action.⁷

⁷ Judith Butler, 'Gender trouble: feminist theory and psychoanalytic discourse', in *ibid.* p. 325.

⁸ Stuart Marshall talks of Foucault's 'reverse discourse' as a form of 'necessary fiction' (*How Do I Look*, p. 24); a term also used by Richard Dyer (*Now You See It*, p. 285).

It is against a background of such intense theoretical negotiations around what it could mean to be queer that politics and practice take place, and the theory is implicated in the practice. In *How Do I Look*, Richard Fung, Isaac Julien and Stuart Marshall all contribute as theoreticians as well as filmmakers. However, promoting a useful tension, Liz Kotz at the same time dismisses theory, and Marussia Bociurkiw points to the difficulty of finding theory simultaneously 'very important' and 'debilitating' (p. 280). Particularly difficult seems to have been the appropriation of feminist psychoanalytic work for queer politics, particularly that Mulveyan strand which discusses the representation of women. Having passed the 'unhelpful binarism' (p. 191) of its earlier focus on positive images, queer theory needed an approach more open to processes of subjectivity. But if feminist psychoanalytic theory seemed to offer an obvious solution⁹, it has not proved ideal: for heterosexuality is, quite literally, everywhere you look – and that includes within existing psychoanalytic models of representation. It is in revealing and challenging this that queer film theory is making its most important theoretical contributions. As Judith Mayne suggests in her contribution to *How Do I Look*:

Psychoanalytic theory of sexual difference is a theory of gender difference. . . [thus] the preferred term 'sexual difference' in feminist film theory slides . . . into a crude determinism whereby there is no representation without heterosexuality (p. 20).

For as long as the passive object of the gaze is feminine and the active subject masculine, 'cinematic identification finds its most basic conditions of possibility in the heterosexual division of the universe' (p. 127).

A consideration of lesbianism, for example—an issue rendered passive in classic psychoanalytic theory—immediately questions such assumptions, and from this, theory can be opened out to address all film viewing and not just queer spectatorship. Thus in *How Do I Look* Teresa de Lauretis suggests the need to redefine 'the conditions of vision' as well as 'modes of representation'. (p. 224) The first of these involves reconceptualizing the spectating subject, allowing for a queer fantasy closely related to that formulated by Elizabeth Cowie as an escape from the unhappy specular

⁹ For an alternative possibility, see Bruce Brasell, 'My Hustler: gay spectatorship as cruising', *Wide Angle*, vol. 14, no. 2 (1992), pp. 54–64.

10 Elizabeth Cowie *Fantasia m f*
no. 9 (1984) pp. 71–104

transvestism that film theory seemed to be foisting upon women.¹⁰ Quoting Sue Ellen Case, de Lauretis argues that queer fantasy replaces 'the Lacanian slash with a lesbian bar' (p. 225) – as a coupled rather than a split subjectivity, a form of viewing which makes it possible for all spectators to escape the restrictive positions which have been theorized for them. De Lauretis's point about modes of representation directly addresses textual aspects of queer filmmaking, suggesting the possibility of dramatizing these issues, of making fantasy explicit for the spectator (as does *She Must Be Seeing Things* [Sheila McLaughlin, 1987])

As long as 'identity politics' remains in decline, generalizations about queer spectatorship are difficult. But if 'queer' is a label assigning the bearer not so much to a sexuality as to a certain (limited) community, then modes of spectatorship may be deduced from this. Both *How Do I Look* and *Now You See It* consider, implicitly or explicitly, what Elizabeth Ellsworth has referred to as 'interpretive communities', the idea of the cultural competences brought to a film viewing situation.¹¹ The implication is that, as members of communities, some queer spectators will bring certain predictable intertexts to their reading of a film. Judith Mayne refers to 'lesbian readings' which rely upon a standard appropriation of images from mainstream films. Richard Dyer refers to 'gay resonances' within films, where, for example, 'Much of the imagery of men in the film is that of gay porn magazines of the period' (*Now You See It*, p. 125).¹² While the idea of 'interpretive communities' does not, of course, embrace all homosexuals over time and across countries, it does allow this aspect of identity to be theorized as a spectatorial effect.

One particularly interesting aspect of the intertexts which may inform queer spectatorship is the reconsideration afforded authorship, which becomes an issue of 'agency in the cultural struggle' (*How Do I Look*, p. 181), of a practical 'signifying function' (p. 110). For a gay audience, knowledge of a gay filmmaker 'informs our readings' (*Now You See It*, p. 31) – often promoting an awareness of irony, of 'the conflicting demands of performance and self-expression' (*How Do I Look*, p. 119) and of ambiguity. This ironical awareness can be extended further into queer spectatorship: this is the twilight zone of 'excess, of contradiction between characters and roles'. The space has a name, and it informs much queer theory: camp.

Camp is about surface, roles, about 'the idea of dressing up as the assumption of identity'.¹³ It is 'the ability to hold a passionate belief in something together with a concomitant recognition of its artificiality' – especially gender roles. It has traditionally been associated with gay male culture. Teresa de Lauretis, in *How Do I Look*, considers the possibilities of lesbian camp, advancing a more powerful version of the 'masquerade' of femininity. This point,

11 Elizabeth Ellsworth *Illicit pleasures: feminist spectators and Personal Best Wide Angle* vol. 8 no. 2 (1986) pp. 45–56

12 Dyer is referring here to *Scorpio Rising* (Kenneth Anger, 1962–3)

13 Jack Babuscio *Camp and the gay sensibility* in Richard Dyer (ed.) *Guys and Film* (London: British Film Institute, 1977) p. 40

which has also been taken up by other queer writers (see *Now You See It*, p. 198), is discussed here in the context of butch-femme roles. This, according to de Lauretis, represents a challenge to the fixity of gender roles by 'Mimicking it . . . show[ing] the uncanny distance' (*How Do I Look*, p. 251). The problem with camp, though, comes with its postmodern challenge to identity. 'There is nothing groovy about the political predicament of postmodernism', warns Kobena Mercer 'the fragmentation of social relations, the loss of identity, difference' (*How Do I Look*, p. 214) – not to mention the fact that it appropriates gay images back into its 'straight postmodern canon'. However, Richard Dyer suggests that gay films do maintain this distance by sustaining the feeling that some things still matter. Against the indifferent banality flaunted so proudly by postmodernity, gay film finds strength in a Baudrillardian fatality. 'Oppression . . . beatings, arrests, court cases, discrimination, murder . . . It is hard in this context to be skimmingly superficial . . . It is art for which mattering still matters' (*Now You See It*, pp. 284–5).

Mattering becomes increasingly obvious in the area of pornography. For if gay male sex has become, in the most painful sense, fatal, its representation surely matters most urgently. In her contribution to *How Do I Look*, Cindy Patton points out that

[E]ach argument about the nature of representation [is] conducted against a background of death witnessed and community destruction survived (p. 36)

These arguments increasingly reveal the drawbacks of old ideas of identity, for there is no aspect held in common by all men and all women who participate in same-gender sexual acts. And in their attempts to inform queers of the dangers of AIDS, makers of safe-sex porn have had to face the fact that not all queers use pornography nor even identify themselves as 'homosexual', let alone 'queer'. Thus, as Dennis Altman says, 'a major concern has been to reach people who do not belong to a sexual community, individuals who have sex in very isolated ways' (*How Do I Look*, p. 55).

Pornography has revealed 'the illusory unity of a gay community', shown by 'the failure of mainstream AIDS groups to work effectively outside the white, middle-class gay male core group' (p. 32). Researchers for the CHAP project in Australia say that 'the responses of men with the lowest incomes, less education and more vulnerable labour market situation [indicate] that their sexuality was less separated out from the heterosexual matrix as a distinct and acknowledged cultural form . . . [with] less involvement in safe sex, less condom use, and a greater likelihood of unprotected anal sex with casual partners'.¹⁴ It is obvious, then, why queer theory is fatal, why it matters so much – without an understanding of how identity functions, and how film functions within it, practical moves in safe

¹⁴ G. W. Dowsett, Mark Davis and R. W. Connell, 'Lifestyles of the not-so-rich and quite unfamous', in Robert Aldrich and Garry Wotherspoon (eds), *Gay Perspectives: Essays in Australian Gay Culture* (Sydney: University of Sydney, 1992), pp. 150–1.

sex education will be seriously hampered. It is important that theorists like Cindy Patton and Richard Fung are working to produce useful and positive safe pornography.

The two books under review respectively address 'gay and lesbian film' and 'queer film and video'. But there is one absence from this list, perhaps minor but nonetheless interesting. Richard Dyer points out that gay film has only been really successfully distributed as pornography or art film; and the works discussed in both books support this thesis. And, when answering the question 'which homosexuality?', the communities constructed by gay film and video will be determined by exhibition practices. For art film at least, the aspects of Kobena Mercer's mantra which seem particularly relevant are 'white, middle-class'. The 'New Queer Wave' is a case in point, and Pratibha Parmar's disparagement of the television series, *Out* (Channel 4, 1989–) for not being queer enough¹⁵ seems to miss the point. that in establishing a necessary fiction of identity in the modern western world, television is potentially the single most important instrument. As a private practice, conducted by virtually everyone, the homosexual identity constructed through images on television could be part of the largest gay community yet defined

15 The new queer cinema p. 35

review:

Philip Hayward (ed.), *Picture This: Media Representations of Visual Art and Artists*. London: John Libbey and Company Ltd, 1988, 200pp.

Philip Hayward (ed.), *Culture Technology and Creativity in the Late Twentieth Century*. London: John Libbey and Company Ltd, 1992, 248pp.

SANDRA KEMP

Rock videos and feature films in which the faces of dead rock and film stars are superimposed over those of live actors . . . ; 'virtual realities', or mass entertainment forms where the participatory adventurer comes to interact physically with the simulated characters, objects and events within the game . . . , salons in which you sample different hairstyles by having them montaged onto your video image

Philip Hayward's new collection (*Culture, Technology and Creativity*), like his earlier one (*Picture This*), is concerned with how the massive burgeoning of the image and of the technologies of its production have radically changed conditions and possibilities of production for both art and the artist. In his introduction to *Culture, Technology and Creativity*, Hayward quotes Soviet industrial designer Yuri Soloviev's address to the 1968 UNESCO symposium held in Tbilisi (with the heady enthusiasm of the 1960s):

With industrial design and its synthesis of elements belonging to the engineer, the artist and the scientist, a special language will at the same time evolve to enable all three to co-operate; perhaps also a new and higher creative activity will come into being; a kind of synthesis of all the tasks and methods involved in pursuing the aims of science, technology and art (p. 3)

This concern with the changed conditions of creative thought (the role of the artist, the audience and of artistic creativity), and a new aesthetic, is also at issue in *Picture This*. In 'All that is solid melts on the air: art, video representation and postmodernity', Steven Bode quotes Fredric Jameson's now classic essay on postmodernism which points to a changing specular and spatial dynamic that opens up new types of possibility for the postmodern *flâneur*: 'a new kind of hyper-space or hyper-reality in which to wander and make connections yet which, in its fluid nature, demands that traditional modes of discourse and conventional ways of seeing be re-tested or re-thought' (p. 65). The essays in *Picture This* speculate on how the visual styles of the media have fed back into art and architecture. But here, as in *Culture, Technology and Creativity*, as Jeremy Walsh argues, the pressing question becomes what is now to be taken seriously as art practice.

the electronic image, the television image, the computer generated image, still exist, possibly will *always* exist, in a disputed territory which, however artful, is not quite 'Art'. The fact that what is seen is entirely the result of a technological process and that any 'magic' in the image can be attributed to the power of the machine or its software means that an evaluation of the image within the traditional discourse of art criticism becomes deeply problematic. The status of the 'artist as genius' cannot be maintained since what is most impressive is the power of the machine the artist used. The role of the artist is therefore changing and the creative process changes with it to become one of problem-solving. Genius is exchanged for Ingenuity (p. 150).

In *Culture, Technology and Creativity*, each contributor is asked to balance 'determinism' versus 'enablement' in the new aesthetics of the image. Most of them see one significant advantage of the new aesthetic in that it transcends the hitherto individualistic, isolated, space of art and its supposedly organic past – when craft was untrammelled by technologies and by a history of production and social relations. All the contributors argue that there has always been some kind of technological presence in the background of artistic production. The new technologies also upset deep-seated cultural assumptions about the essence, function and appeal of art. In 'Holographic art in the space of technology', Rebecca Coyle notes how holograms were initially introduced into public contexts such as shop window displays, commercial exhibitions and portraiture. These now also include routine applications on such everyday items as credit cards, souvenir trinkets, home video packaging and the covers of magazines and blockbuster novels (p. 68). Or, as Steven Bode points out in 'All that is solid melts on the air', in a pop video you might routinely expect to find: the mise-en-scene of a well known movie, the imagery of a famous painter;

and the plotline of a popular cartoon (*Picture This*, p. 67). In such a context, traditional art history and criticism – stylistics, iconographical analysis, historical content and formal analysis – become inadequate and outdated. Marja Bijvoet, Philip Brophy and Anne-Marie Willis argue that it is increasingly less relevant to think about separate image-producing technologies than to seek a new field of critical activity that will transcend the previously separate concerns of historians and theorists (*Culture, Technology and Creativity*, pp. 19, 91, 198).

At the same time, this optimism about the possibilities of the new aesthetic and its criticism is tempered by urgent questions about the relationship between new technologies, the arts, and militaristic and personal surveillance. Paul Virilio has advanced a radical thesis which perceives contemporary information technology as being produced to serve the needs of a profoundly militarized global system which had introduced its own logics into dominant modes of perception in the late twentieth century. In 'Art bying the dust: some considerations on the time, economy and cultural practices of postmodernism', Tony Fry sees Virilio's work as demonstrating an inconvertible fusion between the eye and weapons (*Culture, Technology and Creativity*, p. 165). Andy Darley, meanwhile, is equally concerned with corporate control. In 'From abstraction to simulation: notes on the history of computer imaging', he asks: 'has the possibility of utilizing computers, or indeed any new technological medium, as part of an independent and/or oppositional practice been effectively negated in the light of . . . a control which allows, with the resources involved, a constant fuelling of the means of perfecting the vast specular machine that is the media' (p. 60). It is, of course, a fashionable tenet of postmodernism that stylistic developments in western culture are indicative of a major cultural shift affected by the latest stage of international monopoly capitalism.

If these two anthologies are concerned primarily with the conditions of production of 'technological' art, both are equally concerned with the position of the audience or viewer in relation to the new aesthetic. The essays are at their most interesting when they speculate on what Andrew Murphie, in 'Negotiating presence – performance and new technologies', calls 'the fractal nature of our media experience and the effect it has on our subjectivities and their fantasies' (*Culture, Technology and Creativity*, p. 220). From Jameson to Debord to Merleau-Ponty, the books are full of quotations on specularity. In 'Digitization and the living death of photography', Anne-Marie Willis, for example, quotes Guy Debord:

The spectacle inherits all the weaknesses of the Western philosophical project which undertook to comprehend activity in terms of the categories of seeing, furthermore, it is based on the

incessant spread of the precise technical rationality which grew out of this thought (*Culture, Technology and Creativity*, p 197).

And, as George Barber points out in 'Scratch and after edit suite technology and the determination of style in video art', for Merleau-Ponty, a fundamental of vision is that, with open eyes, one does not choose whether to see or not. Ultimately seeing has a fascination within itself. Part of the holding power of moving images – film and video – is precisely this flow. 'Scratch', then, represents concentrated energy at this mesmeric level; it never offers anything that would draw one in. It stays on the surface. Or, to take another example, as Steven Bode comments in 'All that is solid melts on the air', one finds in pop video a general abandonment of even the pretext of linear narrative, with an emphasis instead on the textual intensities of elaborate clusters of images and special effects (*Picture This*, p 67). Pop video makes viewers construct meaning out of a complex set of differently articulated discourses. *Nine Evenings and Engineering*, which took place in the Armory building in New York City from 13 to 23 October 1966, was a landmark in the history of performance/theatre/multimedia art. As Marja Bijvoet points out 'over 859 engineering hours went into the production . . . The total audience for the nine days was over 10,000' (*Culture, Technology and Creativity*, p 23). The final programme consisted of a series of nine performances, all of which took place twice. These comprised Steve Paxton's *Physical Things*; Alex Hay's *Grass Field*; Robert Rauschenberg's *Open Score*; David Tudor's *Bandoneon*; Yvonne Rainer's *Carriage Discreteness*, John Cage's *Variations VI*, Lucinda Child's *Vehicle*, Oyvind Fahlstrom's *Kisses Sweeter than Wine*, and Robert Whitman's *Two Holes of Water*. The performances combined the use of carefully programmed and designed systems with various 'found' signals and images, used as either compositional elements or instructional 'triggers'. *Nine Evenings* proved extremely controversial and received highly critical reviews. In her fascinating account of the production, Marja Bijvoet quotes Brian O'Doherty:

the evenings received, on the whole, an appalling press – based mainly on the justifiable irritation of interminable delays, technical failures of the most basic sort, and long, dead spaces between, and sometimes in the middle of pieces. But – as the irritation faded away one is left with startlingly persistent visual images, and strong hints of an alternative theatre that has been lagging in its post-Happenings penumbra between art and theatre (p 25)

There are no surprises in either *Picture This* or *Culture, Technology and Creativity*, and there is a lingering sense that most of the arguments are already well-rehearsed. But what both collections do suggest, and most tantalizingly, is that creative possibility is increasingly and truly fantastic, that it is at its most

teasing when the image is neither product nor origin, and where free-floating images have a context but lack any real coordinates

Do we still believe in appearances, asks Anne-Marie Willis (Culture, Technology and Creativity, p. 198)? This remains the most urgent question. Indeed, the articles in these two books take us beyond the old philosophical arguments about the primacy of the real, with the image regarded as the second-order rendering of the real. In the domain of culture, technology and creativity, there is no longer a concrete world independent of image.

Here then out of the shifting nature of materiality, with its rupturing of reference from representation, we have the arrival of immateriality, of a plethora of information without the verification of the eye (*Culture, Technology and Creativity*, p. 168).

review:

Ian Ang, *Desperately Seeking the Audience*. London: Routledge, 1991, 203pp.

James Lull, *Inside Family Viewing: Ethnographic Research on Television's Audiences* (A Comedia Book). London: Routledge, 1990, 190pp.

MARTIN ALLOR

Over the last decade the fields of communication studies, cultural studies and film studies have all witnessed the development of a relative explosion of studies devoted to the analysis of audience issues. The reasons for this 'return' of the audience in each field have complex roots, some of which each domain share in common while others are quite specific to internal theoretical and political trajectories. Thus, in spite of some versions of the postmodern that have been circulating over the same period, the question of human agency has returned to the centre of debates across the human sciences. The repositioning of debates around the practice of ethnography in cultural anthropology within other disciplines is perhaps the key development here. But at the same time the more general reevaluation of the political legacies of poststructuralism has also turned around the questions of agency, practice, and the politics of interpretation. The so-called postmodern ethnography literature represents almost an ideal-typical merging of these tendencies: poststructuralist critical theory becomes the analytic tool enabling a critique of ethnography as an enunciative practice.¹

Within internal debates in communication studies, cultural studies and film studies, then, figures of the audience have served as local specifications of this revised politics of agency. In each case the

¹ James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth Century Ethnography, Literature and Art* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1988). See also George E. Marcus (ed.), *Rereading Cultural Anthropology* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1992).

political stakes of this development have involved both a negative and a positive moment. The negative pole of argument is directed towards the political liabilities of the perceived lack of agency in other competing approaches within each field: typically cultural industries models in communications, poststructuralist models of ideology in cultural studies, and psychoanalytic approaches in film studies. The positive pole of argument, in and across each field, represents a commitment to a specific conjunctural analysis of the articulations of individual and collective agency with larger systems of social representation and media systems

In the worst of the recent work on audience it has been the negative pole that has dominated. In this kind of work relatively thin ethnographic data (typically interviews or very short-term observation) is taken as evidence of the 'active' audience or of the politics of popularity. This kind of work produces audience as an abstract totality and ontologizes practice as an oppositional agency. The best of recent work develops the positive pole of argument, working through a specification of both the analytic and the political stakes in conjunctural analysis. In very different ways the recent books by Ien Ang and James Lull concerning the connections between television and its relations of reception are exemplary of this reconstructive research.

Lull's book, *Inside Family Viewing*, is a collection of essays, mostly written for communications research journals in the USA during the 1980s. His project during this period has been to set forth an ethnographically based approach to the analysis of the domestic consumption of television. The specification that Lull provides resides precisely in his focus on the family as the social and analytic locus of study. That is to say, he mobilizes the tools of ethnography for the analysis of practices of television reception within the bounds of an identified social institution. Indeed the strongest of the essays in the collection ('The social uses of television', 'Family communication patterns and the social uses of television', and 'A rules approach to the study of television and society') succeed precisely through their attempt to articulate observational study with specific models of the family as a social institution. Lull's deployment of family systems theory and rules approaches from ethnomethodology links the specific concerns of reception study with longstanding North American traditions of family research. In this way, the essays have a pedagogical reach. They subordinate the ethnography of the family audience to the analysis of family as a bounded regime of social action and power. Through this synthesis, and by specifying one of the conjunctures of television reception, Lull's work avoids elevating audience activity to the status of abstract agency.

At the same time Lull's own ethnographic writing is often less successful. He is a careful ethnographic observer, but his accounts

read too descriptively. The essay 'China's new star: the reformation of prime time television' provides a great deal of descriptive detail but leaves unanswered numerous questions as to the levels of articulation between the practices and talk that he records and the institutional relations subtending the specific conjuncture of the social formations of the People's Republic. It is precisely at this level, in the analytic focusing of observational accounts of the family and wider social relations, that cultural studies work with links to Lull's (work by David Morley or Ellen Seiter for example²) has been more successful.

- 2 David Morley 'Where the global meets the local: notes from the sitting room' *Screen* vol. 32 no. 1 (1991) pp. 1–15. Ellen Seiter 'Toys are us: marketing to children and parents' *Cultural Studies* vol. 6 no. 2 (1992) pp. 232–47.

Ien Ang's discursive institutional analysis of television's production of its audiences in *Desperately Seeking the Audience* is important precisely for its demonstration of the necessity of a conjunctural analysis of the wider field of audience articulations within national formations. Her book develops an analysis of the moment of reception within the production process. She moves from the recognition of an institutional constraint in the television institution – the scarcity of predictable knowledge about viewer choice – to an analysis of the mobilization of discursive machineries within broadcasting organizations in disciplining and regularizing this constraint. Ang's work then is not an explicit critique of earlier cultural industries research or poststructuralist analyses of spectatorship and ideology; rather it represents a Foucauldian alternative. Her analysis of the development of institutional knowledge about the market and public audiences of 'private' (the US commercial networks) and 'public' (the BBC, and VARA in the Netherlands) television demonstrates the ways in which the *dispositif* of power/knowledge, articulated in quantitative and qualitative research, *produces* the audience for broadcast networks. Moreover, she provides an analysis of the links between this production and the systems of politics and cultural production specific to each social formation that she analyses.

In this way, *Desperately Seeking the Audience* represents one important model of conjunctural analysis. Ang explicitly defines the analytic reach and limitations of her use of the term 'audience'; she also limits analysis to a particular cycle of social processes and institutions, finally, she identifies the political stakes of just such a conjunctural analysis. One important index of the success of her project is its extendibility. The knowledge that it produces can be linked 'vertically' to analyses of the textual systems produced within these *dispositifs* and to the imbrication of the formations of these institutional publics and the microsocial formations of family reception. Her insights can also be linked 'horizontally' to the analysis of other articulations of publics and culture, cultural policy, competing media, the social functions of social research and polling, and so on.

Desperately Seeking the Audience and *Inside Family Viewing* are

best read, then, as more or less successful examples and antidotes. They are exemplary of the necessity for analytic and political specification of objects of enquiry and social fields in media reception study. In their specificity, they function as antidotes to a negatively motivated field of audience research which simply replaces one set of abstract totalities with another.

index to volumes 31–33

ALLAN, STUART AND CARTER, CYNTHIA

report Cultural Studies Conference, Sheffield City Polytechnic, vol 31, no 3, (1990), pp 331–3

ALLEN, JEANNE THOMAS

report The American Society for Cinema Studies Conference, vol 31, no 4, (1990), pp 435–43

ALLEN, ROBERT C

From exhibition to reception reflections on the audience in film history, vol 31, no 4, (1990), pp 347–56

ARTHURS, JANE

report Spot the Difference BBC Conference on Women in Television, vol 32, no 4, (1991), pp 447–51

BALIDES, CONSTANCE

review Maureen Turim, *Flashbacks in Film Memory and History*, vol 32, no 1, (1991), pp 120–5

BENSON, PETER

Screening desire, vol 31, no 4, (1990), pp 377–89

BOBO, JACQUELINE AND SEITZ, ELLEN

Black feminism and media criticism *The Women of Brewster Place*, vol 32, no 3, (1991), pp 286–302

BODDY, WILLIAM

Alternative television in the United States, vol 31, no 1, (1990), pp 91–101

BODDY, WILLIAM

'Spread like a monster blanket all over the country' CBS and television 1929–33, vol 32, no 2, (1991), pp 173–83

BRAUERHOCH, ANNETTE

report VIPER International Film and Video Convention, vol 33, no 3, (1992), pp 321–3

BROWN, BEVERLEY

review Linda Williams, *Hard Core Power*,

Pleasure and the Frenzy of the Visible, vol 32, no 1, (1991), pp 114–19

BRUNO, GIULIANA

review Giampiero Brunetta, *Buio in sala cent'anni di passioni dello spettatore cinematografico*, vol 32, no 2, (1991), pp 228–33

BRUNSDON, CHARLOTTE

Problems with quality, vol 31, no 1, (1990), pp 67–90

BRUNSDON, CHARLOTTE

Pedagogies of the feminine feminist teaching and women's genres, vol 32, no 4, (1991), pp 364–81

BUTLER, ALISON

review Vève A. Clark, Millicent Hodson and Catrina Neiman, *The Legend of Mava Deren Volume 1, Parts One and Two, Chambers (1942–1947)*, vol 33, no 1, (1992), pp 110–16

BUTLER, ALISON

debate New film histories and the politics of location, vol 33, no 4, (1992), pp 413–27

CARTER, CYNTHIA AND ALLAN, STUART

report Cultural Studies Conference, Sheffield City Polytechnic, vol 31, no 3, (1990), pp 331–3

CARTER, FRICA

review Jane Gaines and Charlotte Herzog (eds) *Fabrications Costume and the Female Body*, vol 32, no 4, (1991) pp 483–90

CARTWRIGHT, LISA

report Society for Animation Studies Conference vol 33, no 2 (1992), pp 201–4

CASEY, FRANCESCO

Cinema in the cinema in Italian films of the fifties *Bellissima* and *La signora senza camelie* vol 33 no 4, (1992), pp 375–93

CAUGHIE, JOHN AND FRITH, SIMON

debate The British Film Institute re-tooling the culture industry, vol 31 no 2, (1990), pp 214–22

- CAUGHIE, JOHN
Adorno's reproach: repetition, difference and television genre, vol. 32, no. 2 (1991), pp. 127–53
- COHAN, STEVEN
Cary Grant in the fifties: indiscretions of the bachelor's masquerade, vol. 33, no. 4 (1992), pp. 394–412
- COOK, PAM
review: Antonia Lant, *Blackout: Reinventing Women for Wartime British Cinema*, vol. 33, no. 4 (1992), pp. 450–4
- CORNER, JOHN
debate: Presumption as theory: 'realism' in television studies, vol. 33, no. 1 (1992), pp. 97–102
- CORNFORD, JAMES AND ROBINS, KEVIN
What is 'flexible' about independent producers?, vol. 33, no. 2 (1992), pp. 190–200
- CRAIK, JENNIFER
review: Andrew Goodwin and Andrew Whannel (eds), *Understanding Television*, John Tulloch and Graham Turner (eds), *Australian Television Programs, Pleasures and Politics*, vol. 32, no. 4, (1991), pp. 458–64
- CREED, BARBARA
Phallic panic: male hysteria and *Dead Ringers*, vol. 31, no. 2 (1990), pp. 125–46
- CREED, BARBARA
review: Andrew Tudor, *Monsters and Mad Scientists: A Cultural History of Horror Movies*, vol. 31, no. 2 (1990), pp. 236–42
- CUBITT, SEAN
report: Signs of the Times and Electronic Visions, vol. 32, no. 2 (1991), pp. 222–4
- CUNNINGHAM, STUART
debate: Cultural theory and broadcasting policy: some Australian observations, vol. 32, no. 1, (1991), pp. 79–93
- DE LAURETIS, TERESA
Guerrilla in the midst: women's cinema in the 80s, vol. 31, no. 1 (1990), pp. 6–25
- DIENST, RICHARD
report: Cultural studies: now and in the future, vol. 31, no. 3 (1990), pp. 328–31
- DONALD, JAMES
review: Robert C. Allen (ed.), *Channels of Discourse*, John Fiske, *Television Culture*, vol. 31, no. 1 (1990), pp. 113–18
- DURANT, ALAN
review: Robert Stam, *Subversive Pleasures: Bakhtin, Cultural Criticisms, and Film*, vol. 31, no. 3 (1990), pp. 334–40
- DURANT, ALAN
Noises offscreen: could a crisis of confidence be good for media studies?, vol. 32, no. 4 (1991), pp. 407–28
- DURANT, ALAN
report: AMFIT: the elusive 'real', vol. 33, no. 4, (1992), pp. 427–9
- ELSAESSER, THOMAS
debate: Early German cinema: audiences, style and paradigms, vol. 33, no. 2, (1992), pp. 205–14
- EYUBOGLU, SELIM
The authorial text and postmodernism: Hitchcock's *Blackmail*, vol. 32, no. 1, (1991), pp. 58–78
- FARQUHAR, MARY ANN
The 'hidden' gender in *Yellow Earth*, vol. 33, no. 2, (1992), pp. 154–64
- FERGUSON, ROBERT
review: Robert Lapsley and Michael Westlake, *Film Theory: An Introduction*, Fred Inglis, *Media Theory: An Introduction*, vol. 32, no. 4, (1991), pp. 471–76
- FORBES, JILL
report: The Warwick Conference on European Cinema, vol. 31, no. 1, (1990), pp. 109–10
- FORGACS, DAVID
Disney animation and the business of childhood, vol. 33, no. 4 (1992), pp. 361–74
- FOWLER, CATHY AND NORDBY, LENA
report: Créteil women's film festival, vol. 33, no. 4, (1992), pp. 429–33
- FREIBERG, FREDA
report: Film and Humanities at the Australian National University, vol. 31, no. 1, (1990), pp. 111–12
- FRITH, SIMON
review: Jim Collins, *Uncommon Cultures: Popular Culture and Post-modernism*, Andrew Ross, *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture*, Morag Shiach, *Discourse on Popular Culture*, vol. 31, no. 2 (1990), pp. 231–5

- FRITH, SIMON AND CALGHIE, JOHN
debate The British Film Institute re-tooling the culture industry, vol 31, no 2, (1990), pp 214–22
- GAINES, JANE M
review Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures*, Constance Penley, *The Future of Illusion Film, Feminism and Psychoanalysis*, Lucy Fischer, *Shot/Countershot Film Tradition and Women's Cinema*, vol 32, no 1, (1991), pp 109–13
- GEORGE, RUSSELL
 Some spatial characteristics of the Hollywood cartoon, vol 31, no 3, (1990), pp 296–321
- GORBMAN, CLAUDIA
 Hans Eisler in Hollywood, vol 32, no 3, (1991), pp 272–85
- GORBMAN, CLAUDIA
report Society for Cinema Studies Conference, vol 32, no 4, (1991) pp 443–7
- GRACE, HELEN
review Jo Spence and Patricia Holland (eds), *Family Snaps The Meanings of Domestic Photography*, Valerie Walkerdine, *Schoolgirl Fictions*, vol 33, no 2, (1992) pp 227–32
- GRANT, MICHAEL
review Kristin Thompson, *Breaking the Glass Armor*, vol 31, no 3, (1990), pp 341–5
- GUNNING, IOM
 Heard over the phone *The Lonely Villa* and the de Lorde tradition of the terrors of technology, vol 32, no 2, (1991), pp 184–96
- HAMILTON, ANNETTE
debate The mediascape of modern Southeast Asia, vol 33, no 1, (1992), pp 81–92
- HAMILTON, ANNETTE
 Family dramas film and modernity in Thailand, vol 33, no 3, (1992), pp 259–73
- HARAI OVICH, MARY BETH
 The proletarian woman's film of the 1930s contending with censorship and entertainment vol 31, no 2, (1990), pp 172–87
- HARTNOLL, GILLIAN
report SIFT a filmographer's database, vol 33 no 3, (1992), pp 324–6
- HIGSON, ANDREW
review Ian Aitken *Film and Reform John Grierson and the Documentary Film Movement*, Paul Swann, *The British Documentary Film Movement, 1926–1946*, vol 32, no 3, (1991), pp 350–6
- HILL, JOHN
review Routledge's 'Cinema and Society' series, vol 31, no 2, (1990), pp 223–30
- HILL, JOHN
review Jonathan Hacker and David Price, *Take 10 Contemporary British Film Directors*, Duncan J Petric, *Creativity and Constraint in the British Film Industry*, vol 33, no 2, (1992), pp 220–26
- HOLLAND, PATRICIA
review Mary Ellen Brown (ed), *Television and Women's Culture*, Christine Geraghty, *Women and Soap Opera*, vol 33, no 1, (1992), pp 122–6
- JACOBS, LEA
 The B film and the problem of cultural distinction, vol 33, no 1, (1992), pp 1–13
- JAYAMANNE, LALEEN
 Sri Lankan family melodrama a cinema of primitive attractions, vol 33, no 2, (1992), pp 145–53
- KASSABIAN, ANAHID
review Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies Narrative Film Music*, Rick Altman, *The American Film Musical*, vol 31, no 1, (1990), pp 119–24
- KEIGHRON, PETER
 Condition critical, vol 32, no 2, (1991), pp 209–19
- KELLY, BRENDA
report MIPCOM '90 Us and Them, an outsider's view, vol 32, no 2, (1991), pp 224–7
- KEMP, SANDRA
review *Camera Obscura A Journal of Feminism and Film Theory*, nos 20–21, special issue 'The Spectatrix' vol 32, no 3 (1991) pp 339–44
- KEMP, SANDRA
review Yvonne Rainer, *The Films of Yvonne Rainer*, vol 33, no 1, (1992) pp 117–21
- KERR, PAUL
 Opportunity knocks? vol 32 no 4 (1991) pp 357–63
- KING, BARRY
report The American Society for Cinema Studies Conference vol 31, no 4 (1990), pp 435–43
- KING, NORMAN
review Noel Burch *Life to those Shadows*, Thomas Elsaesser with Adam Barker (eds) *Early*

- Cinema Space, Frame, Narrative*, BFI videos
Early Cinema Primitives and Pioneers, vol. 33
 no. 1, (1992), pp. 103–9
- KING, SCOTT BENJAMIN
 Sonny's virtues: the gender negotiations of *Miami Vice*, vol. 31, no. 3, (1990), pp. 281–95
- KNIGHT, JULIA
debate: Cincnova: a sign of the times, vol. 33,
 no. 2 (1992), pp. 184–9
- KNIGHT, JULIA
review: Anton Kaes, *From 'Huler' to 'Heimat' The Return of History as Film*, vol. 33, no. 2, (1992),
 pp. 215–19
- KREUTZNER, GABRIELLE AND SEIFER, ELLEN
 Not all 'soaps' are created equal: towards a
 crosscultural criticism of television serials, vol. 32,
 no. 2, (1991), pp. 154–72
- KUHN, ANNETTE
Mandy and possibility, vol. 33, no. 3, (1992),
 pp. 233–43
- KUMAR, KEVAL J
 Indian experiments in media education, vol. 32,
 no. 4, (1991), pp. 400–6
- LANGER, MARK
 The Disney–Fleischer dilemma: product
 differentiation and technical innovation, vol. 33,
 no. 4, (1992), pp. 343–60
- LAPSIKY, ROBERT AND WESTLAKE, MICHAEL
 From *Casablanca* to *Pretty Woman*: the politics of
 romance, vol. 33, no. 1, (1992), pp. 27–49
- LEBEAUX, VICKY
 Daddy's cinema: femininity and mass spectatorship,
 vol. 33, no. 3 (1992), pp. 244–58
- LEMAN, JOY
review: William Boddy, *Fifties Television: The Industry and its Critics*; Mary Ann Watson, *The Expanding Vista: American Television and the Kennedy Years*, vol. 33, no. 3, (1992), pp. 335–41
- LEVIDOW, LES AND ROBINS, KEVIN
debate: The eye of the storm, vol. 32, no. 3, (1991),
 pp. 324–8
- LOUW, P. ERIC
 Media, media education and the development of
 South Africa, vol. 32, no. 4, (1991), pp. 388–99
- LOVELL, ALAN
debate: That was the Workshop that was, vol. 31,
 no. 1, (1990), pp. 102–8
- LOVELL, TERRY
 Landscapes and stories in 1960s British realism,
 vol. 31, no. 4, (1990), pp. 357–76
- MACCABE, COLIN
debate: The British Film Institute: a response,
 vol. 31, no. 3, (1990), pp. 322–3
- MACDONALD, MYRA
report: New directions in media education, vol. 31,
 no. 4, (1990), pp. 443–5
- MALIBY, RICHARD
The King of Kings and the Czar of All the Rushes:
 the propriety of the Christ story, vol. 31, no. 2,
 (1990), pp. 188–213
- MCDONALD, PAUL
 Guy Debord, *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle*, vol. 32, no. 4, (1991), pp. 491–4
- MCGREAL, JILL
review: Pascal Vimenet and Michel Roudévitch
 (eds), *Le cinéma d'animation*, vol. 33, no. 4,
 (1992), pp. 446–9
- MCHUGH, KATHLEEN
report: Society for Cinema Studies Conference,
 vol. 32, no. 4, (1991), pp. 443–7
- MENNAIR, BRIAN
 Television in a post-Soviet union, vol. 33, no. 3,
 (1992), pp. 300–20
- MCPHERSON, TARA
report: Spectating at SCS, vol. 33, no. 4, (1992),
 pp. 438–40
- MICROBBIE, ANGELA
review: Patricia Mellencamp, *Indiscretions: Avant-Garde Film, Video and Feminism*, vol. 32, no. 3,
 (1991), pp. 345–9
- MEDHURST, ANDY
review: Charles J. Maland, *Chaplin and American Culture: The Evolution of a Star Image*; Claudia
 Clausius, *The Gentleman is a Tramp*, vol. 31,
 no. 4, (1990), pp. 458–61
- MEDHURST, ANDY
 That special thrill: *Brief Encounter*, homosexuality
 and authorship, vol. 32, no. 2, (1991), pp. 197–208
- MORLEY, DAVID
 Where the global meets the local: notes from the
 sitting room, vol. 32, no. 1, (1991), pp. 1–15
- NEALE, STEVE
 Questions of genre, vol. 31, no. 1, (1990),
 pp. 45–66

- NEALE, STEVE
Aspects of ideology and narrative form in the American war film, vol 32, no 1, (1991), pp 35–57
- NEALE, STEVE
The Big romance or Something Wild? romantic comedy today, vol 33, no 3, (1992), pp 284–99
- NORDBY, LENA AND FOWLER, CATHY
report Crêteil women's film festival, vol 33, no 4, (1992), pp 429–33
- NOWELL-SMITH, GEOFFREY
Filmography, vol. 32, no. 4, (1991), pp 452–7
- O'REGAN, TOM
debate The rise and fall of entrepreneurial TV Australian TV, 1986–90, vol 32, no 1, (1991), pp 94–108
- OGDON, BETHANY
report 'Console-ing Passions' Television, Video and Feminism Conference, vol 33, no 4, (1992), pp 433–6.
- PATTON, PAUL
review Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1 The Movement-Image* and *Cinema 2 The Time-Image*, vol 32, no 2, (1991), pp. 238–43
- PEARSON, ROBERTA E AND URICCHIO, WILLIAM
How many times shall Caesar bleed in sport. Shakespeare and the cultural debate about moving pictures, vol 31, no 3, (1990), pp 243–61
- PEARSON, TONY
report Britain's Channel 5 at the limits of the spectrum, vol. 31, no 4, (1990), pp 420–34
- PEARSON, TONY
review Richard Taylor and Ian Christie (eds), *Inside the Film Factory New Approaches to Russian and Soviet Cinema*, vol 33, no 3, (1992), pp 327–30
- PROBYN, ELSPETH
New traditionalism and post-feminism TV does the home, vol 31, no 2, (1990), pp 147–59
- RABINOWITZ, LAUREN
Soap opera bridal fantasies, vol 33, no 3, (1992), pp 274–83
- RABOY, MARC
debate Lack of bucks niles Canucks public broadcasting taking the heat in Canada, vol 32, no 4, (1991), pp 429–34
- RADSTONE, SUSANNAH
review James Donald (ed). *Psychoanalysis and Cultural Theory Thresholds*. Ann Kaplan (ed) *Psychoanalysis and Cinema*, vol 32 no 3, (1991) pp 329–38
- REYNAUD, BÉRÉNICE AND VINCEDEAU, GINETTE
report Crêteil Women's Film Festival, vol 32, no 4, (1991), pp 435–42
- RICHARDS, CHRIS
review Stephen Kruger and Ian Wall. *The Media Pack, The Media Manual A Teacher's Guide to Media Studies*, vol 32, no 4, (1991), pp 465–70
- ROBINS, KEVIN AND CORNFORD, JAMES
What is 'flexible' about independent producers?, vol 33, no 2, (1992), pp 190–200
- ROBINS, KEVIN AND LEVIDOW, LES
debate The eye of the storm, vol 32, no 3, (1991), pp 324–8
- ROSS, ANDREW
Ballots, bullets or Batmen can cultural studies do the right thing?, vol 31, no 1, (1990), pp 26–44
- ROWE, KATHLEEN K
Roseanne unruly woman as domestic goddess, vol 31, no 4, (1990), pp 408–19
- SCHLESINGER, PHILIP
review Ellen Seiter, Hans Borchers, Gabriele Kreutzner and Eva-Maria Warth (eds). *Remote Control Television, Audiences, and Cultural Power*, Patricia Mellencamp (ed). *Logics of Television Essays in Cultural Criticism*, vol 32, no 4, (1991), pp 477–82
- SCHWARZ, BILL
review Paddy Scannell and David Cardiff. *A Social History of Broadcasting Volume 1, 1922–1939*, John Corner (ed). *Popular Television in Britain Studies in Cultural History*, vol 33, no 4, (1992), pp 455–61
- SEITER, ELLEN AND BOBO, JACQUELINE
Black feminism and media criticism *The Women of Brewster Place*, vol 32 no 3, (1991), pp 286–302
- SEITER, ELLEN AND KREUTZNER, GABRIELE
Not all 'soaps' are created equal towards a crosscultural criticism of television serials vol 32 no 2, (1991) pp 154–72
- SHARIKOV, ALEXANDER
Does media education exist in the USSR?, vol 32, no 4 (1991) pp 382–7

SHARMAN, LESLIE FELPERIN

review Donald Crafton, *Emile Cohl, Caricature, and Film*, vol 33, no 4 (1992), pp 441–6

SHIACH, MORAG

report Screen Studies Conference vol 33 no 1, (1992), pp 93–6.

SMELIK, ANNEKE

review Judith Mayne, *The Woman at the Keyhole Feminism and Women's Cinema* vol 33, no 3, (1992), pp 331–4

SMITH, MURRAY

report Society for Cinema Studies Conference vol 33, no 4 (1992), pp 436–8

SPRINGER, CLAUDIA

The pleasure of the interface vol 32, no 3, (1991), pp 303–23

STONEMAN, ROD

Sins of commission, vol 33, no 2, (1992), pp 127–44

STRAAYER, CHRIS

The She-man postmodern bi-sexed performance in film and video, vol 31, no 3, (1990), pp 262–80

SIRAW, WILL

report Society for Animation Studies Conference, vol 32, no 2, (1991), pp 220–2

TAYLOR, IAN

The film reviews of Winifred Horrabin, 1927–45, vol 33, no 2, (1992), pp 174–83

THOMPSON, KRISTIN

The Pordenone Film Festival, vol 31, no 3, (1990), pp 110–11

THUMIM, JANET

The 'popular' cash and culture in the postwar British cinema industry, vol 32, no 3 (1991), pp 245–71

URICCHIO, WILLIAM AND PEARSON ROBERTA E

How many times shall Caesar bleed in sport

Shakespeare and the cultural debate about moving pictures, vol 31, no 3, (1990) pp 243–61

VASUDEVAN RAVI

Indian commercial cinema, vol 31, no 4, (1990) pp 446–53

VINCENDEAU, GINETTE

report The 12th Créteil International Women's Film Festival, vol 31 no 3, (1990), pp 323–8

VINCENDEAU, GINETTE

review Sandy Flitterman-Lewis, *To Desire Differently Feminism and the French Cinema*, vol 31, no 4, (1990), pp 454–7

VINCENDEAU GINETTE

France 1945–65 and Hollywood the *policier* as inter-national text, vol 33 no 1, (1992), pp 50–80

VINCENDEAU, GINETTE AND REYNAUD, BÉRÉNICE

report Créteil Women's Film Festival, vol 32, no 4, (1991), pp 435–42

WESTLAKE, MICHAEL AND LAPSLEY, ROBERT

From *Casablanca* to *Pretty Woman* the politics of romance, vol 33, no 1, (1992), pp 27–49

WILLEMEN, PAUL

Bangkok–Bahrain to Berlin–Jerusalem Amos Gitai's editing, vol 33, no 1, (1992), pp 14–26

WILLIAMS, ALAN

review Jacques Aumont, *L'Oeil interminable cinéma et peinture*, vol 32, no 2, (1991), pp 234–7

WILSON, TONY

Reading the postmodernist image a 'cognitive mapping', vol 31, no 4, (1990), pp 390–407

ZURBRUGG, NICHOLAS

Jameson's complaint video-art and the intertextual 'time-wall', vol 32 no 1, (1991) pp 16–34